

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newcastle - Caislean Nua** Ref: **1037**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **312**
Category: **B** Date(s): **10/07/2019**

	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	37	38
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	35	36
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	470	302	312

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Newcastle – Caisleán Nua Mac Fionnegan páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Well done on your huge number of volunteers - for a small population this reflects a strong sense of community. Communications with others in your community is clearly a strong point in Newcastle fostering great community spirit. You have a long list of businesses and public bodies giving you great support no doubt. A strong relationship with your local primary school is really important for Tidy Towns groups and you seem to have good links here in Newcastle. It sounds like the pupils of St Francis National School will make great Newcastle tidy towns members in the future! Indeed, they are already making a great input with tremendous volunteer effort. Lots of positivity in Newcastle is very clear both from your Entry Form and on the ground in your lovely village. Well done on working with local landowners to secure agreement for the new historic walkway – this adjudicator will be back in a private capacity to walk it when it opens! Your Village Design Statement is an excellently produced report – very accessible for a community group and highlighting all Newcastle's assets. This ties in very well with your Three Year Plan – another very well thought-out report making clear your aims and aspirations for Newcastle but also including the practicalities of the work needed. The idea of a 'Village Health Check' is a very good one and next year's adjudicator can look forward to reading it with your 2020 entry!

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

Newcastle is a pretty example of the Irish 'Sráid bhaile' – settlement along a street. This can mean it's hard to find the village centre or nucleus and the focus gets spread too thin. However, your work on the buildings in the old part of the village give a lovely impression while your work on walks will tie together the other important parts that are away from the centre such as the Castle ruins and the school and Church of Ireland church. A lovely, peaceful wander was had by this adjudicator around the beautiful ancient Church of Ireland church and graveyard. This adjudicator always finds churchyards give a great impression and feeling for a place especially historic ones. This did not disappoint but the mix of the old with the new is wonderfully done at Newcastle with the beautiful door sculpture highlighting St Francis of Assisi and the wonders of God's creation – very applicable to Tidy Towns work with St Francis being the patron saint of Ecology and Biodiversity – maybe a nice local theme to pick up on in the future for Newcastle? You have plenty of ongoing projects in this section – lots more to look forward to!

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your new historic walking trail sounds wonderful and we look forward to seeing its fruition in the coming years. Well done on working with the Castle Inn. This kind of liaising is what tidy towns is all about and is to the benefit of both parties. That said, I was disappointed to see the use of herbicide at the base of the fence in the car park and river

banks. Herbicide use beside streams or rivers has potentially lethal consequences for many forms of aquatic life. You have several areas around the village that you maintain. The Pollinator Planting Code is a hugely helpful document listing all sorts of plants, trees and shrubs for all sorts of situations. It is freely available to download at www.pollinators.ie/resources and is a great document to consult whenever you are planting anywhere. It should be particularly helpful for your screening of the Community Centre project.

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

To hear of so much native tree planting taking place in Newcastle is wonderful news and I see from your submission that you plan a bulb planting day in autumn. This is a lovely idea that could make for a great community day. Can we make a suggestion that the bulbs you use are pollinator-friendly snowdrops, grape hyacinths (*muscari*) and crocuses. Unfortunately, the popular daffodils and tulips are not pollinator-friendly as they are of little food value to our all-important pollinator species, however the pollinator friendly bulbs listed above will last for years and years within a lawn situation. Did you know that the crocus meadow in nearby Kilmacurragh Gardens is 300 years old?! So they provide very good value for money! Racefield Estate was visited to see how your native woodland was doing. It was great to see all the young native species trees looking well. They will however, need a bit of care in their first five years or so by way of clearing the grasses around them in order to avoid competition for light and resources for the young saplings. This will involve some manual work as strimming is clearly not an option! Unfortunately, I noticed the base of the adjacent lovely old hedgerow on the road side of this estate had recently been sprayed or burnt. This is so disappointing because grassy spots at the base of hedges and walls are crucial habitats for our bumblebees. Since 2012 alone Ireland's bumblebee populations have fallen by 17% and this is due: to a lack of habitats in the form of such grassy banks; a lack of food in the form of suitable pollen and poisoning due to the overuse of herbicides. We realise that this action was probably not taken by Newcastle Tidy Towns especially since you now espouse no longer using herbicide, however, this is exactly the type of situation where Tidy Towns groups can help guide residents' associations and others who are still unnecessarily using herbicides or clearing 'weeds' from areas that are important habitats. Make sure to download your free copy of the community version of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan and the hugely helpful Pollinator Planting Code at www.pollinators.ie/resources and use them to inform your future actions and help spread the word throughout the Newcastle community. Indeed, the lovely graveyard at Newcastle Church of Ireland church is exactly the right example where the site is clearly maintained but room is left for nature and biodiversity and this is rewarded with a beautiful show of wildflowers. The delicate orange flowers of the beautifully-named Fox-and-cubs were flowering all through the graveyard on adjudication day. You realise how lucky you are to have the Birdwatch Ireland bird sanctuary on your doorstep – keep up your links with the group – there's all sort of potential for great community events on into the future here with bird, wildflower, butterfly and bat walks possible! Your awareness of the important champion trees in your locality is great – there's scope here for a project – perhaps involving the local school – to spread the word through the Newcastle community about these treasures in your midst!

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

You show great awareness of different issues in this category and your strong community spirit shines through in your ongoing projects. Working together you can make a great difference. You will get great use from your new water butts. You have come up with some great recycling and re-using ideas in conjunction with the North Wicklow Country Market. These are inspirational and could be copied around the country – well done!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

With a busy road cutting right through your village, litter control is very difficult but Newcastle was looking very tidy on adjudication day so well done to all. Not only this but you also look after Newcastle beach so it is rightly acknowledged that you carry out Trojan work in this section. Also the children's colourful anti-litter posters raised a smile as well as awareness!

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

Keep up all your liaising with the different residents' groups throughout Newcastle. Your support of each other is the key to keeping on top of issues as they arise. Well done on your work on unoccupied buildings on the main street, they looked well.

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

The approach road from Kilcoole featured a lovely grassy verge and an All-Ireland Pollinator Plan sign was noticed. The best management regime on such rural, grassy verges approaching towns and villages is to just mow one mowers width on the roadside edge of the verge. In this way you let people know that this verge is being managed but its wildlife value is being retained.

Concluding Remarks:

Newcastle looked very well on adjudication day. You clearly have a strong community spirit here and you are making the most of all the assets you have, of which there are several. We look forward to return visits to see how your future projects turn out.