

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tralee** Ref: **351**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **305**
Category: **G** Date(s): **22/07/2015**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2014 | Mark Awarded 2015 |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning | 60 | 46 | 45 |
| Built Environment and Streetscape | 50 | 42 | 42 |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces | 50 | 44 | 44 |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities | 50 | 39 | 39 |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50 | 17 | 20 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 51 | 51 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 33 | 33 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 31 | 31 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 303 | 305 |

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Céad fáilte roimh Towards a Better Tralee go comórtas SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara don bhlain 2015. We wish you every good fortune in your work in creating a better Tralee. Mind you the Tralee that the adjudicator visited left him wondering why you had chosen that name for your umbrella group as at first reading he got the impression that Tralee must have much room for improvement. How delighted I was to read 'Tralee has never looked better' later on. In fact the visit was a delight which one would want to repeat. When I saw the size of your submission I was daunted at the hours that would have to be spent wading through this tome. But then much of the submission turned out to be a history of the built environment of the town or a history of the development of the modern Tralee and descriptions of planned projects. The adjudicator was invited to make notes on each of the projects listed. The adjudicator's report will have to suffice. Of concern to the adjudicator is that the sense of community is lost in this presentation of Tralee. Apart from the photos on litter collection there is very little sense of community involvement to be found in this submission. The joie de vivre that the adjudicator experienced on the streets of the town and in the estates is missing from your submission. It is as if a group had been contracted to write the submission without reference to most members of the community. The adjudicator strongly recommends that your approach to completing the entry form change. Very often less is more. This year's adjudicator notes that the 12 members of committee are 'major stakeholders' in promoting Tralee. Wonderful but there appears to be little room for the volunteer, at least in the spirit of your submission.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

The builtscape of Tralee is a mixture of many period buildings, the traditional streetscape, and buildings resulting from town urban renewal of the past twenty years. Buildings as the Churches, including the secluded Church of Ireland, the Courthouse, the Presentation Convent are treated with a deserved reverence. Denny Street is still the delight it has been for over two centuries, the Ashe memorial hall providing the focus as one delights at the preservation of the buildings along the street. What a stroke of good planning and good fortune that the St Catherine's Hospital of old has been transformed sensitively into the new County Council offices of the present, the Church surviving with dignity. Sadly there are quite a few vacant premises and houses throughout the town which detract from their surroundings but as one admires the Brogue one feels that times change and fortunes also. Those rejuvenated fortunes are also apparent at Benners Hotel and The Ashe Hotel. One building that needs comfort is the old gate lodge on Killeen Road. It is a shame that this jewel is defaced with weeds as if the use of a gate lodge is obsolete and there is no worthwhile future for the building in this modern age. Streets like Castle Street are a mixture of fine signage and very poor tatty fronts and one would wish that authorities had more control over the appearance of these businesses. There quite a few smaller shopping centres dotted about whose signage and appearance dominates the more traditional appearance. It must be gratifying for your town planners to see people meeting, greeting, relaxing with a cup of coffee, shopping or just moving on in the multi dimensional town

square.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

There are some outstanding examples of landscaping throughout Tralee. Among those are the raised beds outside the cemetery, hydrangeas to the front of the Brandon, landscaping at the entrance to Denny Street, the trees along the Dan Spring Road, your Rose Walk is divine, the railings adding to the picture tubs of flowers at many locations. But of course the douze points goes to the Town Park. This Park is such a wonderful experience so easily accessed in the centre of town with elements to engage every age group and there are people from every age group benefiting from the vast variety of possibilities. Roundabouts are a landscaping treat, wonderful for the GAA enthusiasts to see footballers honoured from arrival. It is evident that much time is devoted to the planting and maintenance of landscaped beds throughout Tralee. Many of the beds are kerbed by timbers and each of these is high maintenance and challenging when mowing and strimming. As many of these beds are grass based you might consider removing the kerbing entirely and allowing the bed to grow directly out of the lawn as at one side of the entrance to Michael O'Regan Place. There is a raised bed on one side and the plants just pop up on the other side of the entrance and look very natural in this setting. Whereas at Ráth Rónáin the timber kerbing devalues the appearance of the name stone and the planting. Would the planting in the open space in Ogham Rian make a better show without the kerbed protection? Those responsible for tree growth have to be complimented but it seems to the adjudicator that in certain areas tree planting and maintenance is a challenge. Single trees are targets, tree clusters in certain areas not prone to vandalism should be considered as an option. Your memorial to the Royal Munster Fusiliers was admired in its wonderful surroundings.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

In a town with such a big population there is an urgent need for possibilities to walk, jog, relax, play and Tralee offers many such opportunities. And Tralee has plans for further expansion of these plans. The Slí an Dúlra was taken, a delightful avenue with the built town amenities on one hand and the experience of the wilderness of the countryside on the other. While the adjudicator did not take the walk to Blennerville it is evident that many people use this walk for recreation. Your new projects at the Sean Crispie Park is a wonderful opportunity to gain access and relax by the stream. Across the road the senses are aroused in the park by the pedestrian bridge, by the sculpture, the landscaping and the opportunity to chill. In order for the adjudicator to have a total overview of the natural amenities of Tralee he must visit Ballyseedy Wood, an area much used by the locals, a walk facilitated by the fine pathways and the route directions. The wildlife information panels add to the experience for the visitor, the scent of wild garlic hangs in the air and well done of the use of feeding trays. Could that be Indian Balsam on the river bank at the Sean Crispie Park?

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

The support that Kerry County Council is giving through SEAI to many buildings in the town for investment in insulation of those buildings is admirable. Promotion of allotments is also a laudable resource management project. Are many of the towns people making use of the allotment opportunities? The adjudicator was delighted to happen upon the Community garden in the middle of the Town Park and see the amount of fruit plants. The Repair Café is also a wonderful waste reduction initiative. There is reference to the Green Flag in the schools in the Community Involvement section of the submission. How many schools have attained Green Flag status? Are many of the secondary schools involved in the Green Flag movement? It is also heartening that continuous provision is being made for the provision of cycle lanes throughout the town. Your library service and the promotion of libraries deserves positive mention. Well done. As the projects mentioned in the submission are generally from the top down projects one would like to hear of projects undertaken by individual voluntary groups in Tralee. What contribution are individuals making to the elimination of waste ideal?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The public realm all along the many roadways to Tralee creates a tidy and cared-for impression of Tralee. The footpaths, cycle lanes, the grass margins, fresh road markings, weedfree kerbing all contribute to an appealing appearance. Then the many roundabout on the main roads create a sense of a town of some substance. It is the name signage on many premises that challenges that impression of the town of some substance as much of this signage is of a plastic tacky appearance. The Bill Kinnerk Road needs attention. The adjudicator visited a number of estates on this road, estates that have no name sign, the grass maintenance leaves a lot to be desired. Then there is quite an amount of fly posting throughout creating the impression that anyone can hammer an advertisement of their event into the grass margin on a whim. It is a hopeful sign that your Toward a Better Tralee Group have approached McDonalds regarding litter awareness and control. Well done. Well done also to the many groups who participate in the Spring Clean and the weekly litter picks. But littering is a problem in public parks, in car parks, in some estates. On the other hand the plague of graffiti seems to be well under control. Instead we have to wonderful art on a wall in one of the estates visited.

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

Tralee is a heavily populated town with all available opportunities on the approach roads used for ribbon development of earlier days and the estate development of more recent years. In earlier times terraces were constructed in the inner town, many of which still add to the character of the town. Houses along Cloonbeg Terrace are as native to Tralee as the rose and as beautiful. St Johns Park, right at the hub of town life for a number of generations, and improves with age. In the more recent spree the lack of land for building was compensated for by the development of the blocks of apartments which now dominate the skyline in many locations but also bringing

new more modern designs to cohabit with the earlier terraces and bungalows.

Many estates were visited and the adjudicator must mention the Manor Village as being the outstanding location in which to live. The houses are well maintained, front gardens are in bloom and could also be in Bloom. But the treatment of the public areas is a joy, the planning so meticulous, the planting so imaginative and varied. Walls are screened, all year round colour and texture a consideration. There is an emphasis on rose growth, one bed being the concept of a creative genius, roses of varied colours leading to a crescendo of pink at the entrance to the walk and the butterfly garden. Other estates visited also inspired confidence such as the treatment of the open space in Woodlands, the treatment of an old ditch at Woodbrook. But where the landscaped beds are neglected they spoil the overall effect as at Bruach na hAbhann.

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

The road lay-out in Tralee has created a most effective road connectivity between major destinations thus relieving the centre of the town from further traffic congestion. These link roads connect the Killorglin Road to the Killarney road, the old Listowel Road to the Clash Road, to mention but two examples. The Bracker O'Regan Road provides the same connectivity. No matter where one travels one is aware of the fine network of cycle lanes and the fine condition of the footpaths. . This determination to create an environment with ease of travel and safety to pedestrian and cyclist is being continued with the off road route for the students of Tralee CBS. Your submission describes some of the maintenance and improvement work that is ongoing and one appreciates the challenge that the road system provides for a local authority. There is very little of significance to distinguish the approach roads to the town. For the most part these are highly residential with very little opportunity for landscaping in the public domain. The Clash Road is quite distressed with vacant premises and neglect of attention to weed control. There is no need to be more specific. After one passes the attractive hotel on the Killorglin Road the appearance deteriorates also. The most scenic route into town is the tree lined old road that leads down to the wetlands. The many lanes off the main streets are an important part of the streetscape of town. The entrance to Milk Market Lane and to Barrack Lane are most inviting. The one gets a flavour of old Tralee with Lána an Ghréasai or the brick imprints of the windows and doors of old on a stone wall. The appearance of these lanes is mixed. The adjudicator is surprised that the arrival into the town is not announced with some adornment that befits this proud town but meagre basic town signs.

Concluding Remarks:

This town figures strongly in the national public mind and the first time visitor will not be disappointed because image and reality resemble one another. There is no mistaking that this is the town of the rose and how well you wear that crown. The buzz in the town centre suggests that people are happy to visit and that locals are content in their home surroundings. Well done.