

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blessington** Ref: **713**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **265**  
Category: **D** Date(s): **01/07/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	35	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	31	32
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	29
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>254</b>	<b>265</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Blessington TidyTowns is very welcome to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition 2016. Thank you for your application form which was professionally presented and easy to follow, exactly what is required on a wet adjudication day in early July! It would be beneficial if you could include the date of project completion when discussing each project as we noted that some were also mentioned last year. We enjoyed reading through your up-beat and indeed passionate entry submission and summary of work completed since we last visited. Your current group are well organised and are doing sterling work for the community of Blessington. Indeed, the current committee have had some wonderful achievements since your formation in 2012, particularly where you have sought and obtained funding from the County Wicklow Partnership. We are pleased that you have received recognition for your efforts and we congratulate you on winning the Local Community Group of the Year last year. You communicate well with the local community using a variety of media resources available to you. You have a Junior TidyTowns Group and have developed close links with the various schools and we wish you well on further developing the youth element of the competition as you move forward.

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

Your enthusiasm is not confined to paper, when walking around Blessington we were able to see first-hand the work and dedication your team give to improving the built environment and streetscape. St. Mary's Church of Ireland with its spire is a prominent feature and adds much interest to the main thoroughfare. The Downshire Hotel building looks well, though we note that the lights still require attention. The Church of Our Lady of the Most Holy Sacrament is of striking modern design and together with the Coimin Centre looked very well on adjudication day. A large number of businesses are playing their part and presenting their properties with care and pride. Businesses which are deemed deserving of mention include West Wicklow House, Kenny's Kitchen, Credit Union, Miley's Pub, Grange Con Café, Doyle Fox and Associates Solicitors and Crimin Family Butcher. Establishing the Best Presented Business Premise Awards' is noteworthy and this adjudicator will be checking your Facebook page with interest once you announce the winner! We note that you continue to work on improving derelict and occupied buildings and this is to be applauded. We are sure that you are aware that places like Lucky Inn and O'Horoas are letting you down in terms of presentation and it is hoped that premises like these come into use in time. This adjudicator also liked the creative frontage of the bookstore. Both the Topaz and Maxol petrol stations maintain tidy forecourts. The building beside the Topaz (opposite Omega Bearings and Industrial) has weeds growing out of the guttering which gives a run-down appearance. Encourage businesses to be more thoughtful in their choice of shop signage, some have large over powering signs and often designs not in-keeping with the building. This adjudicator believes that there is now too much signage at the Centra store with the addition of the 'Smooch Ice-cream' sign, although this would appear to be temporary. Trees are a prominent and positive feature to your streetscape. In the vicinity of Aldi and the Boxing Club where the trees are not mature the streetscape is not as aesthetically pleasing. This

shows the importance of planting for the future. The Council Offices are well presented however we thought that perhaps the neighbouring Fire Station would benefit from a fresh coat of paint. Blessington No. 1 School was well presented and the neighbouring GAA grounds have a very presentable entranceway. You have a number of other projects such as the seat at St. Marys Church, the Primary Care Centre, and the new covered bus stop that we noted during our visit as being completed.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

You recognise the long term value of tree planting and are continuing to plant trees in various locations. Perhaps because of this you received great publicity during the ESB National Tree Week. Conduct an audit of trees shortly as tree ties are still on trees outside Aldi and in other locations throughout the town when they are no longer required and most likely are doing more harm than good. Many business premises had colourful window boxes and hanging baskets and we thank them for their efforts. There is quite a lot of green and open spaces at many of the housing estates which is not often seen in other towns. Your work supporting the All Ireland Pollinator plan is laudable and the Bumblebee roundabout and Beehaven projects are examples of projects that should be shared to other groups around the County and indeed rest of the Country. Thanks are due to the local bee keeper who is assisting you with plant choices. Landscaping and planting is considered now to be much more successful since you began thinking about year round colour and sustainable planting schemes.

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

The Pure Mile Booklet with information on the history, culture and biodiversity of past and present inhabitants of Blessington has been completed to an excellent standard. Where can visitors obtain this? The booklet directs people to local natural amenities such as the marsh land and lake at the bridge and other swamp nearby. The Blessington Lakes area also offers direct access to the wildlife and habitats associated with the Special Area of Protection. You promote a busy calendar of events in association with the Native Woodland Trust site in Russborough. The 'Let's Bee Friendly' brochure for Blessington is another fabulous project promoting the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan. It is great that you are getting ideas and inspiration from other Tidy Towns and tweaking them to fit your town. After some searching we did not find the new interpretive panel at Demesne Pond. You have this category of the competition well under control and we hope you can keep the strong momentum up for next year.

### **Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaíthe:**

Engagement is one of the keys to success in this category and we are pleased to hear that you are holding events such as the rainwater harvesting business event in association with Sturdy Products and engaging in a productive way with your stakeholders. Other projects such as participation in the Green Home Programme, your Swap-Night held in March, promotion of local charity shops etc., are all helping to raise awareness of resource use and encouraging people to conserve resources. Working with the Social Enterprise in relation to recycling waste electrical and electronic equipment is a win-win for both organisations. Are there other similar social enterprises that you could link in with? Perhaps contact the Rediscovery Centre or the Community Reuse Network to see if any exciting collaborations can materialise. We liked the St Mary's School Garden located at the SuperValu carpark. Here we noted some interesting reuse ideas, such as what appears to be a tumbler drier turned into a planter! This garden is a facility that will allow the children to develop skills and learning opportunities and experience being able to grow their own vegetables. Hopefully all those involved are able to visit the garden over the summer holidays and harvest some of these edible delights, learning from an early age the importance of farm to fork. We noted the bike stands that have been erected on the main street and it was heartening to see a young family securing their bikes here when we walked by. Your attendance at the Monaghan Tidy Towns Network Conference in April has paid dividends. You have a very comprehensive submission in relation to this category this year. It is clear that you have a good understanding of the category requirements and we would ask that you continue your fabulous work and continue to make Blessington a more sustainable town.

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

Litter control was considered to be excellent on the day we visited. Two drinks bottles were noted on the road near the Bumble Bee Roundabout and outside the Community College (it would appear from cars). Signage in and around the town would benefit from attention, be it cleaning or replacement. For example, the signs outside the Council Office (Motor Tax) office and the No Dumping sign at the Burgage cemetery should be cleaned. Other signs require straightening such as the directional sign to Lake Shore Holiday Village on the main N81 junction and the sign to the Tourist Office beside the Downshire. In terms of fly posting and graffiti we note that you are removing these as and when needed. Some construction and demolition waste has been dumped just past the J.Kelly sponsored roundabout heading towards the No. 1 School, it looked unsightly. In Ashton housing estate it was good to see a responsible dog owner cleaning up after his dog! We hope other dog owners follow this good example. In the cemetery just inside the entrance gates there is a substantial pile of clay, grass, pots and other cemetery related waste. A better solution should be found for these materials. When looking for the interpretive sign at Demesne Lake we noted some litter (cans, milk cartons etc.) on the banking over the railings, perhaps this area should be an area targeted. Concrete fencing along the Dublin Road would need repaired or replaced. The roadside verge outside of the multi-storey car-park (in the vicinity of Dance Trax) would benefit from some attention. The large bring bank centre at the Dunnes Stores complex was clean and tidy on the day we visited as was the bring centre at SuperValu.

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

The estates competition is a great success and we are sure takes significant effort to manage. It is really beneficial

though as the standard of presentation in the residential areas is good. We visited a number of housing estates, namely: Deer Park, Woodleigh, Ashton, Glending, Oak Drive, St. Josephs, Mountain View, Rocky Pool, Rocky Pool Crescent and Lakeview, Blessington Manor, Beachdale. In Woodleigh consider planting climbers such as honeysuckle along the large expanse of block wall beside the large green area. We liked how the grass was neatly cut but that areas had also been left uncut which increases biodiversity. Your adjudicator liked the more modern housing design in Glending but was sorry to learn about the ongoing issues in relation to poor construction quality and legacy issues of the construction boom. The recently painted houses look well here, others have red staining which we assume is one of the issues. A simple task of kerbside weeding could help improve the landscaping aesthetics in Glending, perhaps this could be completed on one of your TidyTowns work nights. Box hedging at the Beachdale entrance is very attractive. We thank the resident's associations that participated in the National Spring Clean and whose members continue to be a great support to Blessington TidyTowns.

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

The welcome sign and associated planting on the N81 approach from Dublin is delightful and gives a good first impression. Well done for receiving sponsorship from J.Kelly Motors and Qualitas Property partners for the maintenance of the roundabouts on the Inner Relief Road. Fencing along fields in the vicinity of the roundabout at J.Kelly Motors has fallen down. In contrast, the black metal fencing along the Inner Relief Road is much more presentable, and we noted the well maintained grass and edging. The Bumble Bee Roundabout was in full bloom and looks bright – a very successful project. The signage here works well. A fenced site on the Old Ballymore Road looks out of place beside the other well-presented households. While roads may be of good quality in the majority of places the main thoroughfare could be improved in some locations such as the N81 near Sturdy Products. On the Main Street we admired the Horseshoe Arch marking the entranceway to an old forge.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

We are without doubt that the committee of Blessington TidyTowns are an extremely assiduous and informed bunch and have conducted a great deal of hard work over the past 12 months with the help and support of the local community and others. While you are making great strides there is still a way to go to move into the higher echelons of the competition. We hope that some of the comments given will serve to highlight the level of detail required as you build upon your marks each year. Your adjudicator has great belief that you can go far. Best wishes for 2017!