

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Blessington** Ref: **713**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **289**
Category: **E** Date(s): **05/08/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	38	40
Streetscape & Public Places	50	36	37
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	33	36
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	28	30
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30	31
TOTAL MARK	450	276	289

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Blessington (Baile Coimín) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. Thank you for your map, your application form and accompanying material. You have a reasonable number of people involved in your committee. It is a difficult job but always worth trying to get more people involved if even only for an hour. Try to use your communication channels to do this. Word of mouth can sometimes be the best. You have a good range of public, business and private organisations that help you with your activities. Your Facebook page is up to date and active. Congratulations on winning the Bank of Ireland Enterprise Town for Lenister. As a suggestion, in your application form please start each category with your new projects (N), then the maintained projects (M) and finally the future projects (FP). Number all the projects sequentially (don't restart numbering in each category). Then use the number of each new project in the application form on the map and map legend as appropriate. Some projects won't be marked on the map. You could also highlight what category each project is in. This makes it very clear what projects are new, where to find them on the ground and the information in your application form and makes it less likely that your adjudicator will miss anything. You can indicate landmarks on the map with letters or another symbol other than numbers. Your collections of photos from your photographic competition were stunning.

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

You have inherited a wonderful built and natural heritage. As you point out there are derelict premises but you are working on improving them. Your Best Presented Business Premise Awards creates a bit of competition and encourages owners to do their bit for the town. W. Twyford and the Credit Union House, Hennessys Hardware, all caught the eye. Wicklow and South Dublin County Councils have shop front design guides which give examples of both traditional and modern designs, which may be of use to you in helping shop fronts be upgraded or redesigned when and if the need arises. The large mature trees add a lot of character and enclosure to what would otherwise feel like a very wide poorly defined street. I am commenting on the main street trees in this category, as the trees add so much to the streetscape. It almost feels like that in some places on the main street, that you are on the edge of woodland that has some buildings, rather than in the middle of a town with some trees. It would be worthwhile and prudent to put in place a plan for their staggered replacement as some of them are reaching maturity and showing signs of decline. The species choice to replace them will be crucial in continuing the current atmosphere and character. Don't use birch as they don't have the bulk needed. Species such as street tree varieties of lime, oak, plane or beech may be suitable but consideration will be needed to ground preparation and services to accommodate such large trees. The replacement of the current stock of trees could be incorporated into any future street improvement works. Try to encourage property owners when they are replacing window to use timber as they add a lot of character to historic buildings and will last longer and easier to repair than PVC, once they are maintained.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

As mentioned above there is a legacy of large parkland trees dotted around your community. Their dominance in the scene is being eroded by time and new developments, which don't include them. You should seek out new homes for some parkland trees. The new roundabout landscape treatment on the Naas road has included a weeping willow which will in time become the dominant landmark of the surrounding area. Some other locations noted during my short visit for planting of parkland trees include the Community College grounds, the green area in front of Westpark, the open space in Beechdale, industrial area near the playground. You will be more familiar than me of other possible locations. Your spring bulb planting, sustainable planting schemes and roundabout landscaping are all noted positively.

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

You have a Biodiversity Action Plan for your community with numerous proposals for the coming years. It is well laid out with clear actions. It would benefit with clear target on when projects will be completed. You have held/ promoted a number of environmental awareness raising walks and talks including bee, frog, bat, forest and butterfly. You have been also busy with your urban orchard project. It might be worthwhile promoting your work at these sites with a small (A4) sign. Please update you adjudicator with your progress on this with a map or list of sites completed. In your tree planting make sure to keep a minimum of 1m radius around all trees free from weeds and grass. This will help the tree to grow strong and vigorous and also stop lawnmower decks and strimmers rubbing up against the trees which can and usually does lead to their death a number of years later. You have also continued you work on the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, your Beehaven, worked with schools and Native woodland Trust, encouraged late grass cutting and discouraged the use of pesticides.

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

You have participated and/or organised a recycling and climate change workshops, increased your non paper communication and use double sided printing, held a waste reduction week, launched a conscious cup campaign, and launched a new Facebook page dedicated to making Blessington a greener town. You are making good inroads in this category and should soon see the benefits from your awareness raising. What some groups also find beneficial is to break down this category into waste, water, energy and transport categories and to cover all 4 sub categories each year with new and continuing projects.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Unfortunately some litter was seen on adjudication day with litter and cigarette butts and kerbside weeds near and around Blessington Town Centre. The cigarette butts are understandable, but the kerb side weeds need attention. It is unfortunate to see this at such a central location. You run a number of initiatives under this category and I wonder if it is worth considering trying an "Adopt a Spot" campaign where individuals pledge to clean up a short section, say their boundary properties and a bit more. Similar initiatives and have found that this motivate others to contribute as they feel that they are not the only ones and that each bit will add up to a big area that is maintained. Maybe run a campaign to see if you can get others to make a pledge to Adopt a Spot.

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

A number of residential areas were visited on adjudication day including Glenview, Deerpark, Ashton and Beechdale. Beechdale has some fabulous mature beech which creates a special kind of atmosphere in the estate. It was noticed though that there are no beech trees in the central open space. Maybe this would be a suitable spot for a grove of beech trees to be planted? The trees in Ashton are suffering from overzealous pruning and crown thinning would be a more sympathetic treatment and also reduce the work required in the long term. Some areas could maybe allow go a little more "wild" to increase biodiversity. A great source for wildlife gardening is <http://www.wlhf.org/> or No Nettles Required, The Truth About Wildlife Gardening by Ken Thompson.

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

Your treatments of your approach roads are appropriate with a mix of long and short grass. Some of the industrial areas could do with grass verge tree planting and naturalising of their boundaries in order to lessen their visual impact. Road surfaces are generally of good order. Some of the paving slabs in the centre of the town appear to be suffering as many were cracked and could do with attention.

Concluding Remarks:

Blessington is a very attractive large town with considerable potential to do very well in the competition. It was a pleasure visiting your village and I wish you well with your plans for the future.