

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bray - Bré** Ref: **256**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **321**
Category: **H** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	49	51
Streetscape & Public Places	60	43	45
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	44	46
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	20	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	470	307	321

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Bray – Bré (Brí Chualainn) páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Many thanks for your comprehensive application. Your application form is very impressive with an excellent layout and lots of very helpful before and after photos. Your A3 size map is one of the best seen by this adjudicator and the colour-coding of projects is most helpful with a small word of caution to double cross-check your numbering system between your application form and the map as some numbers were wrong making reading a bit confusing. The gridlines are another helpful addition. Thank you for your multi-annual plan which was duly studied. A few small improvements could be made to it by putting it into a simple table format assigning projects to different years and even different sub-committees or individuals. Also your work could be classified in the table as ongoing maintenance, new or future projects – this not only shows the work you have ahead but it also highlights the huge amount of work you have already carried out! It is clear from your application that you have established links with a huge list of public and private bodies on north Wicklow – this is so important to give Bray TidyTowns the network of support that it needs and deserves for all the wonderful work it is doing to make the town an even better place for both the resident and the visitor.

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

Bray is blessed with the beautiful 'bone structure' of gracious Victorian and Edwardian architecture – something to be envied by many other places and so vital that it be minded and loved by Bray's citizens. Well done on your long and impressive list of projects in this section. The new Entrance to Bray planters are very handsome and great to hear of their water conservation irrigation system, however, several of their plants were not 'pollinator-friendly' and it is vital that these are used because many of Ireland's pollinator species (bumble bees, solitary bees, hoverflies etc.) populations are in crisis. According to National Biodiversity Data Centre figures our bumblebee numbers have dropped by 17% since 2012 alone. Reasons appear to be a lack of food (i.e. pollen) and lack of nesting habitat (grassy areas at the bases of hedges or walls) as well as indirect poisoning through widespread herbicide use. We in TidyTowns can do a huge amount to help all across Ireland by making a few changes to our gardening and landscaping habits. Firstly, we need to plant a range of plants that will provide lots of different types of pollen thus providing a healthy varied diet for the pollinators. Unfortunately, few of the annual plants (e.g. Petunias, Lobelias or Pelargoniums) do this because either they have been hybridised to a state of little pollen or their double flowers mean the insects cannot physically access the pollen. However, many, many herbaceous and shrubby perennial plants have lots of good pollen and the NBDC have produced an excellent really helpful guide on what plants to pick for where in their 'Pollinator Planting Code' which is freely available at www.pollinators.ie/resources Please refer to this guide when planting your planters and landscaping. The other beautiful and sustainable feature of herbaceous and shrubby perennials is that they can be obtained freely through cuttings and splittings from some of the beautiful mature gardens dotted all over Bray – there's bound to be many green-fingered Bray citizens who can contribute to

Bray Tidy Towns in this way. Your work on the Train station is terrific and acknowledged to have been ongoing over several years but it will be worth it for such an important landmark in the town and one that is seen by so many people every day. The War memorial on Quinsboro Road was looking beautiful after its facelift – a very important part of Bray's history with so many local families losing sons, brothers and fathers. With the work done on the monument here, there is still potential for a future project to 'green up' this area by planting a bed of herbaceous and shrubby perennials along the base of the semi-circular wall behind the monument. If planting isn't possible here, then planters similar to your new Entrance to Bray planters could be installed. They would break up the monotony of the wall and provide a foil against the monument while helping our beleaguered pollinators at the same time! The new benches dotted around the town are a huge improvement and will be so much easier for you to look after on into the future. The more benches the better – they provide such vital infrastructure for a long established large town like Bray that has so many elderly inhabitants who quite rightly enjoy sitting down and watching the world go by in their much-loved home town. The Shopfront competition is a terrific initiative and of great importance for a town such as Bray with a long shopping tradition – this adjudicator was often brought there on shopping trips in childhood and indeed my parents before me! Your monthly competition will encourage shop owners to go that extra distance in the maintenance of their shopfronts thus providing pleasure for both the customer and the passer-by while maintaining the integral fabric of the town. The plans for the Florentine Centre look very interesting and it is hoped its development will bring more business back to the Main Street which is at the heart of Bray town. The Victorian Bandstand is an iconic building on Bray seafront and its refurbishment is wonderful. Maintenance of any building exposed to sea spray and winds is always difficult but it is so worth it with this important building which is representative of Bray's past and its future. Likewise, the proposed renovations of the two Victorian shelters will be complimentary to this project and we look forward to their return to splendour in the future. Future adjudicators can look forward to your planned painted traffic light boxes. Such boxes have been seen in other towns and they are such a wonderful way of bringing colour and individual character into towns and villages. Good luck with this scheme.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Peoples Park was basking in autumn sunshine on adjudication day and it is looking very well. It has a wonderful row of mature trees along the Dargle Road – the Sweet Chestnuts are particularly impressive. However, it was disappointing to see that herbicide had been used along the base of the fence on the western end of the park – you mention that you are planning a biodiversity area at the west of the park – this is completely incompatible with herbicide use so please use this informed knowledge to persuade whoever is using it to stop. The bulb planting scheme is a lovely idea and something to look forward to in the spring. You don't mention what bulbs were used. Unfortunately, neither daffodils nor tulips are of any food value to pollinators but crocuses, snowdrops, muscari and alliums are all of great pollinator value. The re-landscaped Herbert Road carpark was visited and looks well – the Rowan trees are a lovely addition. We loved the sound of Weed & Wine at the Seafront planters -what a novel idea and one that may well catch on – adding a sophisticated touch to a task of drudgery! The landscaping of the Dargle River walk was much admired – this is a lovely new space to be used and its planting is really good here with lots of pollinator-friendly species used still providing plenty of colour in October. Your extensive tree planting carried out on Bray Head and around the town recently is great news. The new planting at the Library was looking well with good plant choices here too. Well done on your work with local residents to keep the little oasis that is Sidmonton Park open for the public to enjoy – it was very busy indeed on adjudication day with lots of local young families making great use of it. Many congratulations to Bray for retaining its Blue Flag this year. This takes a lot of work and co-operation between many different groups and Bray Tidy Towns can take a bow for their important role in retaining this flag. Indeed, another facet of this work was being fastidiously carried out during adjudication with a baby seal being guarded from disturbance by nosy humans! It was good to see on local social media and through posters that this event was being used to inform the public of the life cycle of our seal populations and how vital it is to let nature take its course without us disturbing mother and baby. Your marigold area in front of Martello Terrace was visited. This bed which is in such a prominent position offers great potential for lots of colourful display and lots of pollinator food with herbaceous and shrubby perennial plants that are happy in coastal spots. Look at the very helpful lists provided in the 'Pollinator Planting Code' at www.pollinators.ie/resources for planting ideas for this bed. Bray Head features several pleasant green, grassy areas below the car park, along the lower walking path and around the ruined church. All of these areas have great potential for management as wildflower areas. Clearly it would not be suitable for all the areas to become hay/wildflower meadows because lots of areas are needed for simply running around as ably demonstrated by lots of happy children on adjudication day! However, the potential to manage several areas as hay meadows i.e. leaving the first cut until June, removing the cuttings (so as not to enrich the soil) and then a final cut in September after everything has set seed would be wonderful – particularly if meandering grass paths could be mown through the meadow to entice the walker. Little or no wildflower seed would need to be sown as these areas have never been fertilised and there are plenty of wildflower seed sources nearby. Consult with www.pollinators.ie/resources for lots more guidance on setting up wildflower, biodiversity-rich meadows. Your plans for Marram grass planting are admirable and have great potential for setting up a great coastal ecosystem, however, let me offer a note of caution to make sure you get good professional advice from a coastal ecologist following consultation with local Wicklow National Parks and Wildlife Service staff. Well-meant but ill-advised coastal planting interventions around Ireland's coast in the past has resulted in unwanted, troublesome invasive species causing years of subsequent ecological problems!

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

Well done on the production of your Biodiversity Map. It will prove a very useful tool in seeing how important different areas are in Bray for their role in conserving and providing refuge for the local biodiversity. Great to hear that you have signed up to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. Be sure to make full use of all the wonderful resources they offer freely on their great website www.pollinators.ie/resources Your plan to use native species only in wild

areas but allow non-natives in more landscaped areas through the town is a good and wise one (see my note about Martello Terrace bed above)! There is an extensive list of pollinator-friendly plants useful for every sort of situation in the above-mentioned 'Pollinator Planting Code'. This was compiled as part of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan by the National Biodiversity Data Centre and is available to download at the pollinators.ie website above. Please use this guide as your 'bible' for all the planting you do around Bray. It features many herbaceous perennial plants that will give colour for much of the year and most importantly will not need replanting each year thus saving BTT money and time. Also Bray features many beautiful old established private gardens – perhaps the owners can be asked to donate some cuttings and splittings of some of their perennials to BTT for planting around town – the gardeners will be happy to control their plants and BTT will be happy to receive pollinator-friendly plants for free! Your facebook page features many lovely examples of wildflowers, insects, birds and mammals around Bray. This is great to see as part of your role in BTT is to promote awareness of our environment leading to us all taking better care of it – well done. Also your assisting local schools with Biodiversity talks and events such as at Scoil Cualann is all part of this as is your work with Swifts. Swifts are a personal favourite of this adjudicator so I was delighted to hear of your Swift evening and your six new Swift boxes. Please keep future adjudicators informed of how successful these boxes are and definitely keep up your annual Swift event. Towns such as Bray with so many old buildings are habitats of huge importance to these amazing birds whose future is completely tied up with us humans and our activities and building habits. Well done to students of Presentation College who have worked to set up a wildflower meadow in part of their school grounds – this type of project is great in schools and can lead to lots more interesting projects in science, art etc. Keep up your great liaison work with BMD on reducing herbicide use – an aim of no herbicide use would be fantastic – take a look at your neighbours in Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council who are actively working in public parks and areas now with no herbicide use at all. They will be only too happy to share their experiences in this pioneering work.

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

You have a huge amount of information and actions listed in your application in this section and a clear understanding of the different sections involved. The establishment of the North Wicklow Environmental Network is a terrific initiative – various groups and individuals working together sharing their knowledge and experience is always a good idea. This is demonstrated in your support for the excellent Dargle Exchange project run by Commonground – a great idea on the sustainability theme applicable to many other places too so keep up your great example! Albert Walk was visited and its Edible Bray beds are a great idea situated alongside cafes and food places - we felt more publicity is needed for this deserving and interesting project – perhaps a noticeboard outlining what's growing there and why you are doing it – there is great potential to expand this idea to other areas too. You are involved in several small garden projects growing edible plants in Bray which is always a good thing but it did strike this adjudicator that a town as big as Bray should/could have a good sized Community Garden for the public to access and use especially with Wicklow's Garden of Ireland reputation! Perhaps this is an initiative that could be followed up into the future for Bray? You have several future projects lined up in this section including water butts use, water fountains and surveys. We look forward to the fruition of these projects in future competitions.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Bray was looking clean and tidy during the busy weekend of adjudication time. Working in such a busy town filled with both residents and visitors cannot be easy but you are doing a great job here and your Litter Management Plan has clearly helped. Also this success is down to your liaising with BMD which is vitally important in this category for such a big town. We were very impressed with the '3 for the Sea' campaign – well done, this is a brilliant idea that could be spread to other coastal towns and villages far and wide. This project and others such as poster-free zones are all part of your role in improving and increasing awareness of environmental issues to the residents and visitors of Bray. Your ongoing extensive maintenance work is acknowledged in this category and especially well done on your graffiti cover up work (amply illustrated with many photos) which is always problematic in large urban areas. You mention the large scale maintenance needed for the green, silver and black utility boxes – is there potential for you to incorporate projects where these are painted /illustrated in order to make them into an interesting feature in themselves?

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

Bray features many large and long-established housing estates as beautifully illustrated in your submission – all the photographs give a great impression of all the hard work and good community cheer and spirit that goes into the maintenance of these areas! The Fassaroe newly-painted naming stones were looking well with some nice pollinator-friendly plants around them and well done to the Oldcourt residents' association on their great maintenance projects achieved in the last year. Ballymorris was also looking well after all the hard work carried out there over the last year. We like your mobile 'Bray Tidy Towns at work' sign! We really enjoyed reading the Bray Area Travellers' Community Development Group leaflet highlighting the heritage of Bray's Travelling community and links to the Blind Lane and the historic well. In our fast-changing world it is vitally important that these historic and special places be documented and minded. This is especially important in formerly rural areas where encroaching urbanisation can obliterate ancient landscapes and the important links that local people such as the Bray Travellers' Community could potentially disappear. Well done on supporting such an important project – we look forward to more similar projects in the future as the ancient landscape of the greater Bray area could be hiding plenty more fascinating landscape secrets! Your application features many potential future reports in this category – we look forward to the development of these – you have lots of worthwhile ideas – your proposed 'Heritage building/feature of the month' idea is a brilliant one and of huge relevance in a town such as Bray which has such a rich and beautiful built heritage that needs all the support it can get!

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

Your work minding the Old Courthouse which is such a prominent building located in the centre of town is really important. As you mention it appears to be passing 'under the radar' despite its prominence and lovely vernacular architecture. Even the open area in front of it is crying out for more public use – it would make a perfect open-air café situated where it is - sheltered and elevated above the busy main thoroughfare. No pollinator-friendly plants were seen in the flowerbeds – as mentioned above the 'Pollinator Planting Code' has extensive lists of such plants that could be used here. There was a large Buddleia growing out of the gutter at the front of the building and clearly this will result in structural damage if left. The control of the ivy, however, is another story. Ivy is a plant of huge biodiversity value in Ireland as it provides pollen and fruit in the depths of winter as well as evergreen hibernations sites for many different species and so its control is something that always needs careful thought. In general, a 'short back and sides' is recommended for ivy on old buildings and trees unless it is actually causing structural damage. On adjudication day ugly, dead, brown ivy (no longer of any biodiversity value) was hanging on the Old Courthouse building and the removal of this will lead to more problems in the future. The beautiful Stone Pine tree was looking well at the Dublin and Upper Dargle Roads junction. This is indeed a rare tree that deserves good maintenance to prolong its life especially as it forms such a landmark here. Perhaps its presence might inspire some planting of this species in other public open areas/parks of Bray thus ensuring a continuous presence of this lovely type of Pine tree. It is unclear if you obtained the advice of a professional Tree surgeon in order to work on the Stone Pine at the Ravenswell Triangle but please ensure you do for any future work – the Tree Council of Ireland will point you in the right direction (www.treecouncil.ie). Well done on all your liaising work when it comes to roundabouts, bustops and signs around Bray's approach roads – lots of communication is the way forward on all these projects!

Concluding Remarks:

You are the caretakers of beautiful Bray which has an embarrassment of natural, historical and architectural heritage riches! However, most importantly Bray clearly has a local community of residents and visitors who cherish their local place and have a fantastic strength of community spirit. This has taken you far and bodes well for the future of Bray – we look forward to Bray TidyTown's' future competition entries and the continuation of current and fruition of future great plans.