

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Courtown Harbour** Ref: **983**
County: **Wexford** Mark: **221**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	31
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	17
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	5
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28
TOTAL MARK	450	221

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome Courtown Harbour to the 2014 tidy towns competition. We are pleased to read from your entry form that your participation in the competition has led to an overall improvement in the appearance of Courtown Harbour. It is noted that your dedicated committee of eight members would like new members to join you and we would encourage you to go on a recruitment drive. Consider having an open evening to publicise the work that the committee are undertaking and the projects that you have completed and you are currently involved in. In addition, it is also recommended that you speak to local social clubs such as active retirement groups and walking clubs to ascertain if they would like to get involved. Sports clubs can also be a source of new members while interest groups such as residents associations and development groups can normally be relied upon to lend a hand. Be sure to promote flexibility by inviting new members to take part on a project by project basis particularly if they have limited time available. Well done on involving Wexford County Council and Fas in your efforts and we would strongly encourage you to involve local businesses in your work as they will benefit from improving the appearance of Courtown Harbour. Engaging with the schools offers an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of your efforts at local level and to recruit new and enthusiastic young helpers! Many tidy towns groups seek the help of national school and transition year students in their spring cleaning events and this option should be strongly considered by your committee. Thank you for your completed entry form and your map as both were helpful during adjudication. However, it was slightly confusing to see that the projects on the map were numbered and projects on the entry form were not, so make sure that both the map and entry form are consistent with one another in your submission for 2015. You are urged to consider the preparation of a 3 – 5 year action plan as this is an effective way of identifying and scheduling projects under each of the tidy towns categories. Why not ask local residents and businesses what projects they would like to see completed and if possible, involve them in getting the work done?

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

This was the first time that adjudicator had visited Courtown in many years and it proved to be a wonderful surprise as it has improved significantly in the intervening period. The bustling centre of the village is a hive of shops and commercial buildings all of which are in very good condition and carefully maintained. A number of premises stood out and they included Taravies (which is also a nice period building) and Flannigans wake (a family centre with a range of uses). The row of shops on Main Street are also presented to a very high standard and they include Redmond's Pub, Kandyland and Track Sports. The treatment of the vacant site beside Track Sports is also commended. While it is a pity to see such a lovely traditional design building lie vacant, it looked as neat as possible with freshly painted boarded-up windows. We admired the wonderful terrace of traditional design dwellings opposite Maloney's Lounge and these are considered to be among the most impressive period buildings in the village. It is a shame to see that the centrepiece building with its magnificent porch feature is vacant and awaiting a new owner. The public spaces here - such as the space opposite Maloney's and in front of the wishing well cafe are a lovely

addition to the village centre and they are very attractive areas in which to sit and have a coffee or drink. The wishing well is also an attractive shop front and building while the harbour house B&B is a lovely building which looked tremendously well during adjudication. The new apartment building, which overlooked the top square, dominates on its elevated site with its bold modern design but nonetheless is generally looks quite well. It is a shame to see that the units at the ground floor of the building all appear to be vacant. The vacant hotel was spotted and while it is a pity to see such a large building without a productive use, it does not overly detract from its surroundings overlooking the harbour. The toilet block is a fantastic piece of work with its fresh of paint and its amazing landscaping surrounding it, which was a blaze of colour on a sunny June day. This is a fantastic facility and you are heartily commended on your great work here. Dunbars shop looks just as well as any on the Main Street and the Victorian cottages complete with their fabulous gardens were admired while the Irish coastguard property looked vibrant - it was being painted at the time of adjudication. The caravan park adjacent was also spotted and we hope that this site can be returned to active use sometime soon. We enjoyed our visit to the busy harbour as it is an incredibly impressive place in terms of its appearance. It's weed free, there is no litter and it seems to be very well managed with the fishing equipment neatly stacked in organised spots. We are pleased to read from your entry form that the old Bayview hotel has been removed and walls have been painted. Well done also on your work in providing new seats around the village and repainting existing seats.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your work on planting the hanging baskets and large flower boxes in your village is noted. These works were observed during adjudication and their lovely summer colours significantly enhanced the appearance of your charming seaside village. The landscaping on Seamount bank is also most impressive with a very impressive and colourful landscaping bed at the bottom corner. In fact, there are landscaping beds throughout the bank and all of them look quite well. It should be noted that the centre piece of the bank seems to be large exotic species which are not recommended. The contribution of individual businesses and households (in the form of hanging baskets) was also appreciated – with Redmonds and Kandyland on Main Street standing out. The gardens and window boxes of the lovely terraced properties (opposite Maloneys) were awash with summer colours and deserve a special mention. You are commended on your work which involves landscaping and improving a large bank on the River Burrow. The provision of a new Riverwalk and forest walk along the Burrow sound like very exciting and worthwhile projects that would appeal to residents of Courtown Harbour and visitors alike. Perhaps some assistance or advice and funding can be sourced for this community project through Wexford Local Development? The committee is highly commended on its work providing very attractive seating areas which can be found not just along the promenade coastal walk, but in other locations such as Seamount bank and close to the beach car park. This is tremendously important as it provides people with many opportunities to sit and enjoy your charming village and its lovely coastal location.

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

As pointed out by the adjudicator in 2013, Courtown Harbour has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to natural amenities with the lovely beach, the woodland Park and the Riverwalk. It was surprising to note from your entry form that no progress has been made under this category but we would encourage you to consider using your proposed Riverwalk along the Burrow as a wildlife project. We would also like to see a map of its route with your entry form in 2015. It is likely that the River is a high quality riparian habitat that accommodates a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna. Why not consider undertaking a survey of the River to establish its level of biodiversity? This could be undertaken as a school project, either by a local enthusiast, by a local college student or perhaps with the assistance of Birdwatch Ireland. Perhaps there is an ecologist in Wexford County Council who would be interested in getting involved? Once the survey is completed, the findings can be used for preparing interpretive panels or information boards which can be erected along the walk. Wexford County Council or Wexford Local Development may also like to get involved or to provide funding for this. An alternative project could be the completion of a survey of the woodland walk or the coast – as both are valuable local amenities and habitats. A coastal walk (taking advantage of your wooden walkway down to the beach) is a further option. Don't forget that your landscaping schemes can also make a major contribution to biodiversity if you use native plants and trees that are a valuable source of food and shelter for insects and birdlife. Other ideas for projects under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

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

Under this tidy towns category, tidy towns groups are encouraged to think of innovative ways to raise awareness of the need to reduce and eliminate waste as well as devising actions that achieve this. Perhaps, the tidy towns group could organise a waste minimisation seminar or home composting demonstration with the assistance of Wexford County Council as this would help to raise awareness of the issue. The committee is also urged to consider undertaking a simple survey (perhaps with the assistance of the school) in order to find out what waste is being generated and how it can be reduced and eliminated. Other ideas on how to promote effective waste minimisation can be found in the tidy towns handbook. Don't forget that we are interested to hear of how the tidy towns group achieve waste minimisation when undertaking its own projects. For example, do you make your own compost, grow your own plants or harvest rainwater? These are all effective ways to reduce waste production and lead by example. The tourist function of your town also poses challenges as no doubt the demand for recycling facilities is much higher in the summer months. Do the collections of the recycling bins take place on a more frequent basis at these times of the year? Have the committee considered providing segregated litter bins throughout Courtown to encourage recycling? We would be very interested to hear how local businesses in Courtown approach sustainable waste and resource management – why not undertake a survey for 2015?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is noted that litter and weed control activities are undertaken by Fas in the village in addition to maintaining the toilets and cutting the grass regularly. This work could clearly be seen during adjudication. The standard of litter control was considered to be very good, particularly given the numbers of visitors that could be found in Courtown Harbour on a busy June day. While the village was not litter free, incidences of litter were minimal and could be found at the car park of the forest park (a significant amount) and on the approach road from Gorey. Significantly, the village centre, the harbour and the beach were spotless. In terms of tidiness, we heartily commend the great work undertaken on maintaining signage, road verges and footpaths as all looked very well during adjudication. The harbour area was in great condition with no weeds or litter. It could be further improved by the removal of the rust scooper bucket close to the 'ship' on the harbour. A further area that could be improved was the car park at the Woodlands Park on the Gorey Road. This was generally untidy due its poor surfacing, extensive weed and litter. Some illegal dumping was also spotted. It is recommended that this area should be cleaned up as a priority for 2015 as it is a tremendous resource that does not create a good first impression for the visitor. The maintenance work on the ship and around the bottle bank is also acknowledged and we are pleased to report that the bottle bank was spotless on adjudication day.

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

We are pleased to hear that a number of residents associations look after their own areas and the standard of presentation of individual estates was generally considered to be high. Forest Park (close to the woodland walk car park) appeared to be a nice estate while Glen Cove looked well – both appeared to be subject to regular maintenance. Courtown Cove also achieved a similar standard of presentation while the appearance of Woodside park could be improved by removing the weed appearing at the base of boundary wall. The standard of presentation of dwellings (and their gardens) throughout Courtown was considered to be good and this demonstrates that residents take great pride in the appearance of their properties and their village.

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

The approach roads into Courtown were reasonably good. The approach from Gorey is quite nice with 50 kph signs in reasonable condition, well maintained verges and attractive Courtown signs with some perennial planting to the rear. The new Courtown tourism welcomes tidy towns sign was also spotted. However, while the seating areas on this approach are quite nice, it was noted that small amounts of litter could be seen and this distracted from it somewhat. The approach into Courtown from River Chapel achieves a good standard of presentation with well tended verges and clear signage to be seen. While the roads are generally in good condition in Courtown, the surfacing of the road leading down to the ship adjacent to the harbour is poor in places and could be improved.