

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Skibbereen**

Ref: **693**

County: **Cork(West)**

Mark: **305**

Category: **C**

Date(s): **17/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45	46
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	40	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	34	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	37
TOTAL MARK	450	294	305

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Skibbereen is most welcome to the 2015 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your completed application form and additional information including three-year plan. It is great to read about the level of activity that is happening across the town and that this is a kind of glue that brings the community together. While your innovation regarding your map was admired it was sadly impractical as the adjudicator had no Internet access while judging your town. Bear in mind that adjudication happens in a car and while walking around the town so pen and paper still rule. Unfortunately for this year this means that the locations of your projects could only be estimated but rest assured you have not lost marks on this occasion (similarly please don't include links in the form as they cannot be followed). You are working with a broad range of support agencies and the volume of volunteer effort is impressive. It was particularly inspiring to read how you have been successful in attracting young people to your cause. Do share your secrets, many other centres see this as an impossible task. Your three-year plan contains many valuable and worthwhile tasks. For balance it would be advisable to categorise these under each of the contest headings. This will ensure you are progressing in an even fashion. The 'rock' project is especially interesting and we look forward to watching this unfold in due course. Overall this is a very strong entry and you are warmly commended for the energy with which you apply yourselves to the contest. This adjudicator very much enjoyed the time spent in Skibbereen, do keep up the good work and we look forward to returning in 2016.

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

The shiny happy Skibbereen initiative has achieved an epic task in renovating no less than 20 buildings. A nice idea in future would be to include before and after photos in your application form so that the adjudicator can fully appreciate the magnitude of what you have done. That it was instrumental in the opening of new businesses just goes to show what can be done with a smile and a bucket of paint. Some of the projects listed here are best judged under different headings so refer back to the tidy towns handbook to be sure of what goes where. The rock project would be best described as it is part of your built environment, so do give full details here in future years. The Uillinn Art Centre is a very striking and eye-catching feature for your town. It occupies a relaxed civic space with outdoor seating which creates a nice atmosphere. Businesses along Bridge Street are all looking very well and indeed the town has been successful in restraining poor quality signage. This results in a very welcoming effect. The old church of Ireland is a beautiful heritage building, is its neighbour a former train station? A small information plaque would be welcome here. A lovely project would be to renovate the Fairfield bar Guinness billboard. The mural on the gable wall of Baby Hannah's has a great impact. The heritage centre is an important location for the town and the design of the building works very well with the range of both summer colour and more permanent planting. The nearby West Cork Hotel looks great and has retained its distinctive character. A sale agreed sign was noted on the old building at Stream Mill Quay and what a boon for the town it would be were this to find a new use. The civic space at the junction of Main Street and North Street is very well presented although flags on the flagpoles would be

welcome. The finger signage here needs to be spruced up but the general preservation of the built environment here is very good. St Patrick's Cathedral is a major point of interest in the town and its beautiful stonework was admired, complemented by the well painted silver railings. The car park opposite is well laid out but some signage and clutter issues detract slightly (a vacant bus pole and grimy telephone box for instance).

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Well done on your focus on roundabouts and to the local businesses which help with sponsorship. Your tree planting and flowerbed maintenance is noted. Japanese knotweed is to be found in a number of locations around the town. In the first instance you should familiarise yourselves with this alien invasive plant and map its locations. Work then with Cork county council heritage officer to form a strategy for its eradication. Consult with your colleagues in Rosscarbery who are dealing successfully with this problem. Planting in tubs at the river on Stream Mill Quay is unnecessary as the view here really cannot be enhanced. The use of the old railway bridge as a beer garden is a most inviting development, one hopes people don't cast their cigarette butts into the water. Some stored metal fencing in the vicinity should be placed elsewhere. The seating area facing the river however is beautifully done. Luxuriant flowers and large tubs were admired on the Schull road junction (there was no nameplates on this street). Another old Guinness billboard here is crying out to be refurbished. Have you considered contacting Diogo to see if they can assist you in this? Trees on North Street and associated shrubbery are very successful although one tree at Bishop Kelly Institute is dead and should be replaced.

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

This category is first and foremost about raising awareness of your local natural heritage. Your association with the Lough Hyne nature reserve is particularly apt as it remains the country's only marine nature reserve. There is a huge opportunity to explore this unique asset in terms of raising awareness of the sea, its wonders and the threats it is currently under. Some of your projects – 'area in marsh' and 'the cutting' were not well described so it was hard to know what happened here. Remember that planting wildflowers is a contradiction in terms. While it is a good idea in place of amenity grassland it should not be a feature of semi-natural habitats which are home to truly wildflowers. Your biodiversity walk is an excellent initiative and we would love to see more of these.

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

Your new rainwater butts is exactly the kind of project the adjudicator is looking for under this heading and it is noted from your three-year plan that more are on the way. Do make sure you list the schools that participate in the green flag program and the stage they are at. This is a very important movement under this heading as they are doing tremendous work to address our environmental impacts. The tidy towns group can learn a lot from the projects they have implemented and should be trying to roll them out across the community. It's great that you have your own poly-tunnel and composting facility. The charity shops are invaluable in finding new homes for unwanted items. This category calls for continual innovation and you should always be on the lookout for new opportunities to change behaviours and reduce resource use. For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You evidently have a comprehensive approach in addressing litter and tidiness issues and this is essential for a town like Skibbereen. Well done for your participation in the Cork antilitter competition. Your renovation work at the West Cork distillery addresses a number of tidiness issues. An effort should be made to fish out shopping trolleys from the river to the rear of EuroSpar. Finger signage at Uillin is worn and should be repainted. Trolleys belonging to Supervalu were spotted all over town, even one beside the statue to James Goodman! Perhaps they need the €1 deposit scheme that is common elsewhere. Litter control on adjudication day was to a very high standard, well done on this achievement. Despite a handful of tidiness issues raised previously the town is considered to be very tidy and you are doing excellent work to address outstanding issues.

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

Do you liaise directly with residents associations in Skibbereen? Ideally each estate would be represented in your group. Well done to the Orchard, Riverdale and the Moorings for the enhancement works carried out this year. It's a shame that the apartments at Long Quay are not occupied but thankfully their appearance is in good order. Many fine homes and residential estates were admired on adjudication day and well done to all on the high standard of presentation.

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

This adjudicator approached Skibbereen from Castletownsend direction. The roundabout with installation is most impressive and creates a strong point of focus. Some signage in this vicinity is worn however and may need to be refurbished or removed. The EuroSpar area was mostly very clean although building debris at one entrance should be removed. On the road towards Baltimore the sign for Lough Hyne/Baltimore needs to be washed. The Supervalu car park is very clean although a number of dead or failing trees need to be replaced. Baskets of flowers add colour here. Have you given any consideration to the suggestion in last year's report that Skibbereen be made more pedestrian friendly? This adjudicator found that cars seem to get the lion's share of the street space. Road and path surfacing on North Street are very good, greatly enhancing the streetscape here.

Concluding Remarks:

Skibbereen is looking great and this is in no small thanks to the work of your volunteers. Your continued commitment to tidy towns is important to us and do keep up the good work.