

# Tidy Towns Competition 2024

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Wexford - Loch Garman** Ref: **458**  
County: **Wexford** Mark: **375**  
Category: **G** Date(s): **12/06/2024**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2023	Mark Awarded 2024
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	80	56	58
Streetscape & Public Places	80	51	53
Green Spaces and Landscaping	80	52	54
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	55	34	36
Sustainability – Doing more with less	55	25	26
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	55	43	44
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	55	46	47
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>550</b>	<b>363</b>	<b>375</b>

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

Fáilte chuig Comórtas Na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu don bhliain 2024. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn, agus guimíd gach rath ar bhúr gcuid oibre amach anseo. Adh Mór....For the size of your centre, you have a small committee however the numbers within your volunteer base are impressive. It is heartening to see new members of the community from other countries, 14 countries represented, join your group to assist in your ongoing work. Well done on participating in the Saint Patrick's Day Parade & better still, winning the best Community Group award. Thank you for including the labeled pictures. The meitheal around the Fleadh Cheoil in August certainly demonstrates what can be planned when a community comes together to offer their support & you certainly will need an army of volunteers given the number of visitors expected & the streets & lanes that will require constant vigilance to keep them clean & tidy.

It is great too to see many of Wexford's youth get involved at an early age! No community group can be successful without the support of local & government agencies, neighbourhood businesses & other local voluntary groups & your comprehensive list demonstrates the level of support you have from them.

You make good use of your social media platform. It was interesting to look back over the history of your work on your website. There is no doubting you have fantastic support in your endeavours judging from your social media posts.

Engagement with older primary school & secondary school students is imperative. While the focus on clean ups is important, many other opportunities like the Edible Wexford Project & the Rubbish Film Festival offer interesting focal points where increased interactions could be facilitated.

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

With 32 pages attributed to Wexford town in the National Built Heritage Service, any visitor to the town is assured of seeing a rich built heritage. Indeed, it is wonderful to see so much diversity in architectural style – what is now Georgia University, the old Gaol, Selskar Abbey, the Bullring, Wexford Arts Centre, buildings all along Main Street & so many more of interest. The modern buildings add interest e.g. the library, National Opera House, Whites Hotel, Arts Centre extension & others. As a visitor, one would have no idea what the library was without stepping inside as there is no exterior signage – is this a deliberate decision? We noticed many streets & lanes had no place names. If there were plans, in time, to update all names it would be great to see bilingual signs. The information plaques around the town provide an interesting insight into the respective locations. There are many examples of well presented commercial facades that have looked not just at their business premises on the ground floor but have taken the building as a complete package e.g. Green Acres, Franks, Spectrum, John Rattigan, Lily Blooms and Only Natural. As one walks around the town, especially along Main Street, it is clear improvements are taking place with freshly painted business premises, reduced vacancy rates, outdoor dining areas & a steady footfall.

There is not a town or village throughout Ireland that is not dealing with the problems of both dereliction and or

vacancy. You reference the audit carried out by Wexford Borough Council late last year focused on derelict properties on Main Street & adjoining streets. What were their findings? It would be interesting to keep an annual check on the number of properties falling into the categories of derelict/vacant & when remedial action is taken to address the issues. We checked the Active Derelict Sites Register 2023 for Wexford & note Wexford County Council are the owners of a number of the properties. It would be hoped that the new funding schemes targeted specifically at this area would encourage development. During our visit, we were surprised at the number of large commercial premises that were vacant e.g. former Ulster Bank, 1817 building beside the Bull Ring Market, the building on the corner of Main Street & King Street to mention just a few. The use of a vacant property's windows to display past images of the Main Street & of local people is an excellent use of the otherwise dead space.

Additionally, are there plans for the convent & school grounds near Redmond Park that are lying unused? While the Shopfront Improvement Scheme may not be open to Wexford Town this year, it is a good strategy to keep businesses informed about it when open once again. Many communities have found that business owners are so busy with their day-to-day operations that these sources of funding simply pass them by. Each year do let us know those businesses that have improved their facades. Active participation by businesses has to date positively impacted on many a town streetscape. Some Tidy Towns groups in conjunction with local councils and chambers of commerce have initiated Shopfront of the Month/Quarter/Season awards – a little competitive frisson can up the presentation standard.

One of the positive outcomes from the Covid experience was embracing socializing outside & using the environs of various establishments. The installation of the retractable roof canopy on Monck Street extends the usefulness of the space outside the Irish summer & vagaries of the weather forecast. It is a significant structural installation. Are businesses seeing an increase in footfall following the works? There are so many lanes & narrow roads connecting the town's main arteries so your future plans for Fettiits Lane in conjunction with Wexford's youth will be eagerly anticipated. Henrietta Street is an example of an enticing street with colourful facades, canopies & accessible to all. It is no doubt a testament to the interconnected nature of Wexford town that the Fleadh Cheoil is being held there this year & next. Given the size of the undertaking & the expected visitor numbers, it is fantastic to see the Tidy Towns volunteers partner with other local groups to both welcome visitors & keep the town looking its best – not a simple task over the duration of the festivities.

The plans for the southern end of the town at Trinity Wharf are impressive & will clearly take a number of years to be completed. With this development project we would suggest you engage to ensure a focus on well-designed streets – street trees, push for sustainability, harmonise community & nature so social interaction can be supported. Please do ask them to refer to DMURS (Design Manual for Urban Roads & Streets). As a community, you have to push for best quality design & materials.

The mosaic at the town quay is simply stunning – such an artistic installation in a perfect location. It is great to see your collaboration with other local organizations on this project. Indeed, the community has an installation in perpetuity for all to enjoy. Are there plans for any more mosaics along the wall?

The eight murals on the gables throughout the town in addition to the smaller murals are a visual delight & bring colour & vibrancy to these areas. It is lovely too to see how the visual imagery is tied into the history of Wexford town. Also great to see businesses involved as seen on the gable end of Thomas Moore Tavern. You have a fantastic opportunity to develop an art walk/trail. Perhaps a possible project for transition year students to get involved in where technology such as QR codes & TikTok videos could be created.

In relation to a number of projects referenced, the end date is noted as ongoing. It would be helpful to know what the next stages of the plan in relation to the specific projects are & the expected timelines. This you could provide in your three-year plan. Also please provide detail in relation to the projects as it is not clear what actions have been taken in some cases e.g. litter picks at The Quays comes under the section Tidiness & Litter Control rather than Streetscape.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

It is quite the undertaking by your partner group, Wexford in Bloom to plant up over 400 self-watering hanging baskets. Well done to them on sourcing local seaweed feed. The baskets certainly add colour to the streets and clearly this is appreciated by retailers, who support the initiative financially. As they have commenced using more pollinator friendly plants, we spied bacopa; it would be good to see this increase year on year. Our changing climate is presenting longer periods of drought thus increasing the demand for water. How time consuming is the job of watering now & from where is the water sourced for the hanging baskets?

Well done on working with other groups like Care for the Earth and Wexford in Bloom on planting crocuses at Row Street Church. A focus on spring bulbs like crocuses that provide food for early wakening pollinators should be the goal. It is lovely to see pictures of the bulbs in bloom this spring & do share the crocuses flowering next year. While daffodils present wonderful colour & grow well for us humans, they provide little in the way of food for insect life, similar situation with tulips. Perhaps a row of muscari or snowdrops or refer to the All Ireland Pollinator Plan for further inspiration. There are some lovely spaces carved out in the grounds of Rowe Street church with well thought out planting & great to see the addition of new saplings.

The landscaping at Spawell Road/Westgate is very attractive with the mature trees, seating, ground mosaic & art installation. It was great to see people picnicking here while others took a seat & a breather. Some of the flowerbeds are being encroached by grasses and the tree pits on the pathways need weeding. Are there plans to reinstate trees in the empty pits here? There are a number of small public areas where there are some lovely green areas - the garden at the Arts Centre, 1916 Memorial garden, entrance to Selskar's Abbey from Temperance Row, the Faythe, Green Street and the square at Townparks. Some notable businesses with lovely planting schemes are Green Acres & The Stores.

The Quay & Promenade riverside area makes great use of a large space with seating, bike parking, food & drink kiosks & ample space for events. The landscaping was disappointing – the tree pits were clogged with weeds as was the section of beech hedging by the rail tracks, new saplings were not thriving & the large square containers were planted with annuals primarily.

Wexford residents are fortunate to have Redmond Park; it is a gem of a town park. It was evident on adjudication day it is popular with families & young people. Lovely to see a group set up a mobile badminton court. The park has lots of excellent amenities & great to see toilet facilities available. Have you considered applying for the Green Flag status for the park? <https://www.greenflagaward.org/> A few improvements would help & will require the Borough Council's involvement – remove the poles & notices referencing covid, restore the memorial plaque on the front pier & choose a more in keeping sign referencing opening times, paint the gates, look at how memorial trees & plaques are presented & cared for and it would be worthwhile having an arborist perform a check on all the park trees as some require attention.

The newest town park, Min Ryan Park, is impressive. The planting scheme at the entrance is very attractive & wonderful to see perennials & pollinator friendly plants. The vast areas of meadows with swathes of flowering wild flowers were a visual delight. The 100 Million Trees Project plantation is doing well. Lots of amenities on offer & once again great to see so many residents making use of the park – playground, dog park, paths, café, memorial benches, etc. There is considerable work involved in maintaining the Park to a high standard & there was a lot of gardening maintenance work ongoing during our visit. However, it was a shock to see so many of the park's saplings not thriving, indeed some require replacing & others needing their tree ties adjusted. As the trees are so visible, it detracts from the overall experience. The hedging around the playground is similar & we noted significant horsetail incursion in the beds behind the toilets. The latter is invasive & very difficult to eradicate successfully. The addition of 1400 trees planted at The Rocks in December 2023 is a significant project as part of the 100 Million Trees Project. It is difficult to determine if Tidy Towns were directly involved here. Our visit to The Rocks coincided with a lot of construction activity & parking was at a premium. We wondered has this deterred visitors, as we met not one on our walk around. It is a huge area to maintain & whilst accessible for local residents, it is problematic to locate without specific directions, as there is no signage. With the continued focus on tree planting in the town & its environs, it would be worth completing the previously planned town tree survey. Again, this might be a project for students completing An Taisce awards or completing relevant studies & National Tree Week would be an ideal starting point.

Ferrybank was our first stop in Wexford town & affords one a panoramic view of the town from across the water. The park here in front of the swimming pool was a surprise with its old & new groves of trees, flowers beds, art installation, mosaics & sea views. The inset area with the plaque needs cleaning & weeding & many of the new saplings are struggling or dead & again tree ties need attention. Unless one was aware of the walkway, it is not obvious to the casual visitor.

The references to projects at The Rocks, Ferrybank & Redmond Park do not refer to any new initiatives this past year. Are there plans for future improvements as the end date is on-going?

### **Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhitheagsúlacht i do cheantar:**

There is no doubt that there is an open door for continued tree planting & fantastic to hear 6 voluntary groups received trees under the Trees for Wexford campaign. Additionally, the marking of significant events locally with tree planting has a lasting impact, as does large scale tree planting as seen at The Rocks & Min Ryan Park. The active involvement of Green Schools & the respective student population moved the discussion from the classroom to active engagement and great to see tree planting take place at a number of schools in collaboration with your group. Is there any monitoring of how successful the planting has been to date especially when it takes up to 3 years for trees to establish themselves successfully within their environs? There are diminishing returns for such projects if the maintenance is not factored in to the work stream. We have referenced in the preceding section examples of failing planting. We applaud your plans for further tree planting however it is imperative that an effective monitoring plan is put into effect first for the completed projects before embarking on more.

What gets measured gets done! Therefore when referencing your new Pollinator Plan please list the projects & the time lines as it is difficult to determine when all pollinator friendly planting of plants, grasses & bulbs was completed in Min Ryan Park. As you are engaging with other partners, do list their endeavours too & when they were completed. A map built up over time will allow the community to see visually the impact of these collective small, medium & large actions.

The Edible Wexford Project you are involved with in conjunction with Wexford Environmental Network is a fantastic initiative & as evidenced by Incredible Edibles in the UK can engage & uplift a community. Selskar College senior biology students' involvement with the Wexford Edible Towns project as part of Climate Action Week in October 2023 is an excellent example of how to engage Wexford's youth. The space carved out for the project in the car park of the Chamber of Commerce demonstrates what can be achieved with a neglected space. It is clearly a work in progress & it was fantastic to see some of the raised beds in productive use as well as the recently created fruit bushes area. In order to ensure the space is manageable, weeding & strimming will need to take place regularly otherwise the old adage will hold true "One year seeding, seven years weeding". The clear designation of areas for composting is helpful & ensures its use for education. A synopsis of the site's multi year plan should be included next year.

It was disappointing to see the widespread use of herbicide in the grounds of Rowe Street church, along the base of the boundary wall. There was evidence of it in other areas too.

Has a Local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) been completed for Wexford town? There is funding available, Local Biodiversity Action Fund, through the local Biodiversity Officer. The plan is helpful as it provides a road map for the future & guidance on short, medium & long term projects.

It would be great to see the schools involved in biodiversity surveys & there are many to choose from on the National Biodiversity Data Centre, from a 10-minute Flower Timed Insect (FIT) count to garden butterfly monitoring. <https://biodiversityireland.ie/monitoring/>

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

The successful completion of the electric bike pilot is good news. The key to its success is continued engagement

with Wexford's community on locating parking bays where needed & ease of access. Continued monitoring of the use of the bikes will enable the council to determine the demand for the scheme & if the alternative transport option takes cars off the road. This could be another area for the involvement of Wexford's youth in carrying out surveys in this area. During our visit, we only saw 3 users of the scheme.

Nationwide there are an increased number of dedicated cycle lanes, pedestrian walkways & greenways being installed. It would seem that the Newtown Road cycle lane & footpath would link residential, commercial & essential public services. Similar to the electric bikes, determining the success of this infrastructural project will require examination. If the work places located along the route have secure & covered parking for bikes in addition to changing facilities these may encourage employees at these locations to consider cycling to work & leaving the car at home on some work days. As evidenced during our visit, it is still a work in progress.

National Food Waste Recycling Week is a fantastic base on which to build momentum around the issue of reducing food waste. We will be interested to hear in next year's submission any events that you organised or facilitated & the level of community involvement. As you are aware there are many resources available through MyWaste, Stop Food Waste & EPA & where it has been successful local food businesses, schools & households have actively engaged in demonstrations, sharing of recipes & trial periods. You also have the opportunity to promote the many programmes available for chefs & food service teams e.g. GIY's Wasted; Food Waste Charter etc.

Are any of the town's cafes signed up to the Conscious Cup campaign and does the town have a community hydration hub? It would be worth considering raising awareness of both & again perhaps an opportunity to work with Wexford's youth on the former & the council on the latter. <https://consciouscup.ie/resources/communities.php>  
<https://refill.ie/be-awarded-a-refill-station/>

You are indeed fortunate to partner with the Mens Shed & Working Mens Club as their range of skills are invaluable. Well done on upcycling the unwanted benches into useable seating at Redmond Park – circular economy in action. Equally positive to see the composters at Edible Wexford Project made from old pallets & timber & the use of willow for fencing.

The Rubbish Film Festival is a novel approach to raising awareness about environmental problems with secondary school students through the creation of very short films focused on specific environmental topics. The more schools that compete, the greater the opportunity to transmit the urgency of the environmental message to the student body & beyond.

The 14 schools involved in renewing their Green Flags are to be commended, as there is significant work involved for both students & teaching staff in attaining each one. As future leaders & residents of Wexford, it would be hoped that this work would engender in them a pride in their town & a willingness to add value & enhance their locality. Novel reuses for items like reading glasses encourages us all to think about where to rehome items rather than simply bin. Well done to yourselves & the Lion's Club for coordinating the endeavour. Other options are wax from candles for craftspeople, Free2goodhome, etc. Groups like Go Greener with Grangecon are to the fore when trying to locate other outlets for items no longer needed.

As an aside, the permeable parking section at Min Ryan Park car park is a good example of sustainable car parking - reducing hard surfacing & slowing water runoff.

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

Your strategy of micro-cleaning streets clearly has a significant impact if it remains presentable for between 6 – 8 weeks. It is a new approach for this adjudicator & would be worth an article in the Tidy Towns newsletter. There is a sense from many communities that areas free of litter and in pristine condition attract substantially less litter than untended areas. It is a constant work in progress to make littering socially unacceptable. Additionally, it is consistently frustrating to see litter on the ground with receptacles located close by. You reference the assistance from Transition Year students. In order to make this involvement more meaningful & other communities have completed similar exercises, undertake a survey over a specified time period & categorise the waste collected. The Deposit Return Scheme is already having an impact in some communities, both a noticeable reduction in bottles & cans & a revenue generation stream in others.

It would be valuable to know what the impact of the Gum Litter Task Force's campaign in Wexford. Is there a reduction in this type of littering or a greater awareness of its impact?

In relation to cigarette butts, we have seen DIY upright colourful & comical receptacles used to good effect in one or two locations. It is a nationwide battle to encourage smokers to dispose of this litter appropriately.

Some of the information plaques are in need of cleaning e.g. at Selskar Abbey.

It would be hoped that the Deposit Return Scheme would reduce the amount of this litter collected at The Rocks. We saw little litter there during our walk around & once construction at the entrance is completed it will enhance one's first impression.

The entrance to the Ferrybank Walkway was quite littered, as was the bottle bank area although in constant use while we were there. The receptacles at the car park close by was spotless. However, the one at the Tesco/Certa complex had discarded boxes, a lot of debris under the containers & glass on the ground. Overall though, we were impressed at the lack of visible litter on the main thoroughfares through the town especially as there was a strong onshore prevailing wind & it was bin collection day in parts of the town.

This section is also about tidiness & we want to compliment those who look after The Faythe as the cobbling around the 1911 Memorial gate was impeccably maintained. In contrast, the area to the front of the Chamber of Commerce building shows how onerous this task is & how quickly weeds invade the cobbles & litter becomes trapped.

On an annual basis, it is worth conducting an audit of street furniture i.e. poles, bollards & posts that are redundant, damaged or requires painting, unwanted or old commercial signage erected, road markings faded, gulleys blocked etc. While this is initially an arduous task, some large centres tackle it on a grid basis year by year. A location matrix is then created allowing the job in time to become a box ticking exercise.

Other strategies used by urban centres are Adopt A Spot/Pick A Patch for both businesses & residents. Some businesses as part of their CSR policy have taken responsibility for an area or been actively involved in litter picking. Are any of the primary schools involved in the Picker Pals programme? <https://pickerpalsworld.org/>

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

The residents of Hill Street are to be commended for the spotless standard of the street especially as it was bin collection day & it is a busy thoroughfare. Priory Hall has a lovely entrance avenue of trees & green areas & lovely to see the green boundaries between houses – a real woodland setting. Some weeding of the cobblelock at the entrance would enhance the appearance. We noted a few dead trees in communal areas in addition to blocked gulleys. Glenbrook's curved stonewall entrance & mature trees & green areas with landscaped sections is inviting. Again some weeding at the entrance would be beneficial. The swathes of ox eye daisies soften the long block wall at the green. Coill Aoibhinn is fortunate with their large green communal areas. Some of the trees along the entrance avenue need replacing & climbers to screen the inside of the long boundary wall would soften the expanse of grey. They have great capacity for a community orchard or mini forest. Devereux Villas has some very accomplished gardeners & a nice variety of house architectural styles. Bernadette Place is a verdant estate & the grotto area an oasis although we would suggest planting into the ground in order to reduce maintenance & watering. As we drove around the town, it was clearly evident a lot of new housing developments were recently completed or at various construction stages. The landscaping for most is sparse & primarily confined to the entrance areas. Once the estates are completed it would be worth asking the Borough Council to facilitate meetings in order to firstly advise the new residents how to go about forming residents associations & also the funding streams that are available once the group is established. Do many of the existing estates have residents associations? Do any of the residential estates take part in the Wexford County Council Annual Estates Competition that was relaunched last year or the Keep Wexford Beautiful competition? It might be a good first step to gauge interest prior to taking on the launch of a local Best Kept Estate competition. As these competitions allow residents to focus on specific areas of interest it may prove more of a draw especially if all community members in the residential areas can partake.

It would be interesting to know if any of the residents groups applied under the Trees for Wexford campaign. There are also a number of voluntary groups who supply trees to & work with community groups – DC for Bees are focused on creating mini orchards <https://www.hostinireland.com/orchardsinthecommunity> Easy Treesie work with children to plant trees [www.easytreesie.com](http://www.easytreesie.com) and Pocket Forests work with groups in urban areas [www.pocketforests.ie](http://www.pocketforests.ie)

In your submission, do let us know of estates that are engaged in Tidy Towns work or progressing with projects themselves that add to their areas. There are so many estates with more in the pipeline that it will never be feasible to visit all during an adjudication.

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

The approach from the New Ross Roundabout is quite the mix of residential estates, mature trees, hedgerows, etc. There is quite a lot of construction with the new footpath & cycle lane & it would be hoped that the road markings will be freshly redone. The road sweeper is required as there is a built up of silt that is facilitating vigorous weed growth. There are some lovely sections of avenues of trees & it would be a stunning view if this was a planned continuous vista from the roundabout into town especially at the hospital & racecourse as the vast expanse of car parking & block wall respectively do not add to the view. Less evidence of temporary commercial signage would also help. The Rosslare approach has some lovely old stone wall boundaries & it is great to see where commercial entities have retained the mature trees on their boundaries. The availability of footpaths & cycle paths for most of the route is a great amenity. Again it would be fantastic to see all businesses incorporate some landscaping to soften all the hard surfacing.

The N11 approach is memorable with the Crimean Monument on one side & the tower house on the other as one crosses the estuary. As one gets closer to the town, one is struck by the countryside to one side & the commercial premises opposite. Again, little or no landscaping, just more hard surfacing. The unimpeded view of the estuary on the right hand is stunning & the pedestrian access good although the cycle lane disappeared abruptly.

The haphazard nature of erecting temporary signage on approach roads needs to be addressed, as does a planned & consistent decision on landscaping.

The Irish welcome signs are attractive & well located.

## **Concluding Remarks:**

We wish you all the best in hosting the Fleadh Cheoil in August and look forward to seeing a montage of pictures next year. Wexford town has an incredible bounty of natural amenities & it is fantastic to see the improvements in the built environment. Remember your Tidy Towns work is more akin to a marathon than a dash & therefore it will take time to bring everyone with you. As residents see improvements, it creates a groundswell of support & interest. Thank you for providing the suggested route as it was ideal in order to get one's bearings before diving in for a deeper walk around. The map you provided was easy to navigate. One suggestion would be to provide eircodes for the out of town projects e.g. Min Ryan Park & The Rocks. It is good to see your focus in your accompanying three-year plan & next year you might create a matrix of the work with timelines associated with each specific project.