

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Swords** Ref: **160**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **305**
Category: **H** Date(s): **27/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	50
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	14	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
TOTAL MARK	450	286	305

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Swords is very welcome to the SuperValu National Tidy Towns Competition 2017, thank you for your submission this year and your continued participation in the competition, it is always a pleasure to adjudicate Swords and to witness on-going amenity developments. This year was no exception and developments at the Castle and the Town Park are impressive. The committee has created a wide network of supportive groups, bodies and agencies in addition to a strong body of volunteers that can be called upon for Tidy Towns tasks. Engagement with the schools and Youthreach and other young people augers well for the future of Tidy Towns in Swords and of course future community development. Your adjudicator found the small-scale project maps at the end of each section very helpful and respectfully suggests that these are placed at the beginning of each section by way of introduction / overview; it remains to be seen if future adjudicators like them too so try them for the next few adjudications as an experiment. The committee's use of social media is favourably noted particularly your Facebook page with its 600+hits each week. Traditional methods of communication such as information booths at events are laudable also.

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

Swords Castle looks magnificent and offers good interpretive facilities. The streetscape in the town centre looks particularly attractive with its landscaping, The absence of overhead service cables, attractive street furniture (with the exception of one seat) and a built environment managed to a high standard all combines to increase the visual amenity of the streetscape in Swords town centre. Discourage the use of roller security shutters to the roadside of shopfront windows outside of business hours as these can diminish visual amenity; the same point extends to full window stickers which impede the view from into and of a shop. The Castle Shopping Centre needs remedial work in many areas / properties. The Colourtrend premises was admired for its high standard of presentation and 'fun' element in addition to many premises worked upon for this year. Both the Castle and the County Hall are impressive buildings and the Heritage aspect of the Castle and the promotion of Swords Cultural Quarter is an exciting initiative, staff there could not have been more helpful.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Trees along the Main Street are being well-managed and floral displays are colourful, profuse and strategically placed for maximum visual impact. The Town Park looks magnificent offering a variety of facilities and is beautifully landscaped with good signage at the entrance. Saint Colmcilles Well / Memorial Garden is nicely landscaped and features good interpretation to combine heritage with visual and recreational amenity. Congratulations on work accomplished to date for the creation of a community recreational amenity area on the Rathbeale Road; consulting with neighbouring residents is excellent. New planting at Pinnock Hill and Seatown Road is a welcome development and it is great that the old plants have seen a new lease of life throughout the town. It is good to note planting for

'year-round' interest and colour, this is important especially when new trees are planted. Thank you for the detail on tree pruning on Main Street, we await the outcome with interest. Well done on the Polytunnel and your goal of growing the town's bedding plants from seed. The choice of plants is excellent for pollinators.

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

The continuous development of Walking Trails in the Ward Linear Park and its community use for a range of recreational amenity activities enhances Swords amenity status significantly. Well done also on the 'Bug Hotels' and the range of pollinator initiatives. It is wonderful that the range of habitats in the Ward River Valley has been established by the Ward River Valley Ecological Study and that new initiatives are undertaken with reference to the study. Interpretive panels on the flora and fauna of the river valley should now be installed both in the river valley itself and in the Town Park; a Nature Trail should be created and features such as 'Bird Hides' constructed. The identification of invasive species and their management is invaluable for the future of the biodiversity status of Swords and environs. The proposed murals on walls lining the stretch of river within Swords town centre is an exciting initiative in that it not only heritage with nature but also incorporates art and local artists.

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

Congratulations on the use of the Swords website for the promotion and information on waste prevention in addition to providing links to a variety of bodies with expertise to offer in this area. Do keep us updated on the consideration of Swords as a Zero Waste Town. The range of activities undertaken by STT to promote public awareness of sustainable waste and resource management is impressive. Water harvesting, composting and other initiatives made possible by the Polytunnel is excellent as is the Community Garden at Broadmeadow. Liaison with businesses in Swords on their waste prevention and resource management endeavours is favourably acknowledged too. Well done on the results of the Green Homes surveys. Schools are to be congratulated on their Green Flag success. The map of 'Green Places' in Swords is helpful in gaining an overall picture of sustainable waste and resource management in Swords and make it easy to imagine Swords as a Zero Waste Town.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Litter control is excellent within the town and indeed Swords has an overall appearance of tidiness. Regular weekly clean-ups together with special event clean-ups and the annual spring clean / river bed clean are acknowledged. There is a mention of a litter survey in your application but no details. If these are available consideration might be given to attempting to prevent some of the waste at source rather than simply cleaning up thereby reducing the need for so many litter picks. Well done on the new stainless-steel litter bins, they are a great addition to the visual amenity of the streetscape as are improvements to the Shoe Repair premises, the owner is to be commended. Noted also is the input from STT in the clean-up of the Broadmeadow Estuary. Some litter, mostly bottles cans sheet plastic and a traffic cone was noted in the Ward River; it was not a serious problem rather one to watch. Vigilance regarding graffiti, fly tipping, redundant poles and much more is applauded.

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

It is excellent to note thriving community involvement in the presentation of residential estates in Swords where residents take responsibility for their own areas; this is what the competition is all about, community involvement and pride in the environment and fun too! In your adjudicator's opinion, the Glasmore Abbey ruins deserve an interpretation panel and inclusion in a future Heritage Trail. The annual Family Fun Day at Glen Ellan / Sandford Wood, their Spring Clean and their Best Front Garden Competition sounds like a lot of fun in addition to work. The 'Slow Down' initiative in some estates might be extended to all; eventually they could be replaced with (solar powered) smiley faced speed information panels which are more efficient in attracting the attention of motorists than speed limit signs. The landscaped area at Mooretown was especially admired; no doubt the bees like it too.

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

The regular survey of approach roads and lanes with the reporting of issues to FCC is laudable and most effective in preventing problems from becoming major issues. New low maintenance planting on the Dublin entrance at Pinnock Hill is an interesting development and we look forward to future accounts of its effectiveness. Stone wall refurbishment is notable and street furniture improvements are noted in addition to footpath refurbishment. Roundabouts look well too and we note consideration of sculpture for these, we eagerly await the outcome; it is a good idea to travel to other centres to view their installations. The entrance from the M1 at the northern end of the town looks especially well with its name stone, landscaping, and the management of its roundabouts for both visual amenity and biodiversity particularly pollinators.

Concluding Remarks:

Swords is a very large town with many elements to its presentation and must be a big challenge to the Tidy Towns committee; thankfully there are many supports available but nonetheless the Tidy Towns committee and volunteers are doing a great service to the community.