

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bundoran - Bun Dobhráin** Ref: **697**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **284**
Category: **D** Date(s): **30/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	42	43
Streetscape & Public Places	60	40	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	33	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	25	27
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	14	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	36
TOTAL MARK	470	272	284

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

Cuireann an moltóir fáilte roimh Bundoran (Bun Dobhrain) pairt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta Supervalu na mBailte Slachmhara 2019. There appears to be good level of community support in Bundoran for your hard-working committee of seven members who are assisted by another 20 volunteers. We were heartened to read that there is good engagement with Donegal County Council, Tus / DLDC, Pobal and the recently established town team and a range of local businesses such as Supervalu Bundoran, BMG hardware, Eclipse Cinemas and the natural company – all of whom clearly appreciate the benefits delivered by the hard work of the committee from your participation in the Tidy Towns Competition. We note that there are a number of key volunteers who contribute your efforts such as Sister Assumpta Butler of the Bundoran Community Garden, Geraldine Patton of Magh Ene College, Matt Tuttlebee and Fiona McIntyre from the Natural Company. This is particularly important and we urge you to encourage other community and voluntary groups to get involved. Consider approaching local sports clubs like the GAA, Soccer or Athletics – as sports clubs are a valuable source of volunteers in other tidy towns centres. Other voluntary groups that may like to get involved with your projects include; active retirement groups, Mens Shed or your local Historical Society. We are pleased to read that you use social media as well as traditional means of communication such as radio announcements, parish notes and local newspapers to get your message out. It is great to see that there is a good level of engagement between your committee and the local primary school (St McCartan's) and with Magh Ene College through your maintenance and other activities at the Glor na Mara Community Garden. We recommend that you consider collaborating with the teachers and schoolchildren on other projects as there are plenty of opportunities for joint initiatives under the landscaping, nature and biodiversity and sustainability categories. We were delighted to read that the involvement of your community in the competition has led to considerable progress being made in Bundoran and we hope that you continue to participate in the years ahead. Thank you for your comprehensive application form and map as they were very user-friendly and helpful during our visit. The map could be further improved by including the names of key features such as Churches. Your new three year plan was noted and it includes a number of interesting and exciting projects. It could be further improved by including projects under each of the tidy towns categories.

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

We were delighted with the opportunity to visit Bundoran on a bright Sunday afternoon in June. The attractions of your pleasant seaside town are numerous with its inviting beaches, coastal walks, sea views and its wide range of entertainment functions from water and adventure parks to diverse restaurants and bars. We are pleased to see that the standard of presentation of the vast majority of shops and commercial buildings was notably high – and a small number stood out from the rest. The Fitzgerald Hotel and the Ailingham Arms both looked well while the Holyrood Hotel in the centre of the town was particularly impressive. Other commercial premises also drew positive attention such as the Oyster Bar, the Celtic Bar, the American House, Patricia's Restaurant, the brand-new Spar Express Top

Service Station and the Kicking Donkey. The Railway Bar, Sands Amusements, Waves Surf Café and the Parlour, the Salty Shell, Buoys and Gulls, the Wishing Chair Craft Shop, Breslins and Brown Sugar Bakery also deserve praise. While the architecture styles to be seen in Bundoran is a broad mix of modern and traditional, it is great to see that many of the original period buildings remain in active use and in good condition. These include Willard's B&B, St Endas and Auburn. Other historical buildings such as the Church of Ireland and the adjacent terrace of attractive period structures (the majority of which appear in use as tourist accommodation) were admired. The Magh Ene College Building, An Leabharann (the library) and the Eden Bay apartments also caught the eye with their bold modern designs. A small number of vacant and unused buildings were also noted with the Ulster Tourist House, the old Church Building (opposite the old boathouse lodge), the vacant historical building opposite the Health Centre, the building on the promenade beside Bargain King and the single Street service station all provided particularly visible examples. It is noted that one of your projects in 2019 involved carrying out a survey of derelict buildings (with photographs) and we urge you to share these findings with Donegal County Council. This work is likely to prove valuable to them as they are required under the Derelict Sites Act to make a record of all properties that are derelict or in poor condition and they also have powers to compel the owners to take action. Your work forming links between vacant buildings and potential new occupants is also commended. The welcome to Bundoran and the Peak Mural were admired and both add interest to the centre of your town. Attractive murals were also spotted beside the Rock Shore Bar and at the Adventure Centre close to the GAA pitch. It is also noted that a range of improvements have taken place to roads and footpaths throughout the town – all of which have significantly improved its appearance. Well done on opening up a museum below the community centre and we wish you well with this new venture. The new information signage was also appreciated.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Congratulations on the completion of the construction works for the new sewage and wastewater treatment plant at Magheracar and the reopening of the footbridge – these are both important projects that have made a positive difference to your town. It was noted during adjudication that landscaping efforts appear to be focused on timber tiered planters stocked with seasonal flowering plants in a number of key locations along the Main Street and on the approach roads. Whilst these planters looked well and provide fresh summer colours, we recommend that more consideration is given to using pollinator friendly plant varieties as a means of encouraging biodiversity. It is also recommended that locations for permanent additional planted beds should be sought in preference to stand-alone planters. We particularly liked the large and diverse planting bed outside the library building and we wondered if it would be possible to provide additional permanent landscaping beds in other locations such as the car park of the Retail Park or at the car park at Tullan Strand? The central planted bed in the car park beside the playground at Peter Brady Park (above the pier) also looked very well. New permanent planted beds could also be used to accommodate your bee and butterfly seed mix from your community garden. Well done also on providing planting in the tiered planting area to the rear of the tourist office as this introduces lovely summer colours to this central location. The planting at the roundabouts at the Retail Park and on the approach from Ballyshannon was also observed and while they generally looked well, additional monitoring is required as weed was visible here. We were pleased to read in your application form that a number of exciting projects are proposed under this category including the extension of the Western Cliff walk, enhancements to Tullan Strand that will improve access and upgrading the rain shelters along the Rougey Walk. It is also noted that permission (and sponsorship) have been sought for the planting of an Irish wildflower meadow on the two approach roundabouts. It is hoped that these projects are approved and we would appreciate updates on them in 2020.

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

We were delighted to read that the Community Garden has been such a success with its wide variety of vegetables and its mix of 45 different varieties of pollinator friendly plants. This is a major achievement and we were particularly encouraged to read that you are trying to identify locations around Bundoran that would be suitable for planting with the seed mix (of 45 different varieties) that was used in the community garden. However, we urge you to approach this in a planned way. Why not identify locations (either on public/community lands – such as Schools, HSE properties, Council or Church Lands) that could be planted with the seed mix in order to create 'pollination zones'. This would enable you to improve local biodiversity and it could be expanded to include lands belonging to private businesses and private gardens at a later date. We note that you have undertaken a number of projects with the schoolchildren that include planting sunflowers and it is recommended that you involve them in developing these pollination zones. This would be an excellent way of raising awareness and expanding the number of volunteers who help out with your projects! Well done to everyone involved in the potato breeding trials which resulted in seven new varieties of potato being born and bred in Bundoran and which are most suitable to your microclimate. This is an excellent piece of work and we urge you to consider publicising your results and perhaps making the varieties available to local people to grow. Once again, the schools could provide a helping hand in this project by encouraging the schoolchildren to plant them in their own gardens or on school grounds - this could be an interesting green schools project. We were delighted to read that your committee are aware that a greater diversity of plant types is needed in your planting schemes and the research is underway to find suitable varieties to suit your microclimate. Is there a tidy towns network in your county that would enable you to contact other tidy towns groups in Donegal that are based in coastal areas? As Donegal County Council will have a database of other community and voluntary groups (that are members of their PPN – public participation network), perhaps they could help you with this query? Don't forget that meadow style grasses (which are robust enough to withstand local conditions) can also support wildflowers and dandelions which are suitable for pollinators. Why not plan for locations that could accommodate small meadows?

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

We are delighted to read that you have taken the advice of last year's adjudicator on board and undertaken a range of impressive projects under this category for this year's competition. It is pleasing to see that there is a focus on reducing the amount of waste produced in Bundoran and raising awareness of the need to engage in more sustainable behaviour. This is demonstrated by the continuation of rainwater harvesting in the community garden and the harvesting of plant seed mixes (of pollinator friendly varieties) for your future landscaping schemes. Why not develop targets that your committee can adhere to (for example sourcing a minimum of 50% of the plants needed for your schemes from local sources by 2021)? This will enable your committee to lead by example and demonstrate what is possible to other residents. Setting targets for phasing out the use of shop bought plants and fertilisers should also be considered. We were particularly impressed by the work that you have undertaken to foster more sustainable behaviour amongst residents and businesses in Bundoran and discourage the generation of waste. Well done on your work lobbying local festival organisers and it is great to see that the organisers have come on board by providing plastic free areas, compostable food servings and pre pitch tents. The work by 'changemakers' regarding the future planning of public events with business owners and residents is similarly impressive. It is great to see that the number of businesses in your town that are engaging in composting and segregating the waste recycling is growing and we would encourage you to consider doing an audit each year to assess how many are participating and to track their progress. The audit could include a survey of the businesses in order to identify the barriers that they experience to adopting more sustainable behaviour. We were also pleased to read that the schools are getting involved in initiatives like 'think before you flush' and we would love to hear about any other projects that they have undertaken to reduce waste. We would also like to hear about any initiatives among businesses and schools in Bundoran to reduce energy consumption and engage in more sustainable transport. Please let us know in 2020.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The standard of litter control in Bundoran was particularly high during adjudication day. Aside from some isolated pieces of litter on Astoria Road and in the car parks at Supervalu and opposite the Adventure Centre, all areas appeared clean and litter free. This is an impressive achievement as your town covers an extensive area and it attracts large numbers of visitors particularly during the summer months. It was clear during the visit that considerable effort is put into litter picks and cleanups by committee members, volunteers and local businesses. We note from your application form that large amounts of time is spent on this task but this work can be considered to be worthwhile as studies have shown that well maintained areas attract significantly less litter than those that have litter visible. However, the time-consuming nature of litter picks is acknowledged and we urge you to consider some initiatives that other tidy towns groups have found effective. Why not ask beachgoers to engage in a 'two minute beach clean or two minute litter pick' as a means of keeping the beach and coastal paths litter free? You could also ask regular walkers on the cliff walk to pick up any stray pieces of litter that they come across as a way of reducing the amount of time that is spent on these tasks. Well done also on engaging in beach cleans and we would encourage you to ask the schools to get involved as they make excellent school \ TY projects. We would like to commend the schoolchildren on their excellent work on litter picks and for their 'bin it' workshop. We note your ongoing efforts to eliminate the problem of dog fouling and we wish you every success in this. We are pleased to report that dog fouling did not appear to be an issue during our visit. The standard of tidiness was also considered to be high and considerable effort appears to have gone into weed removal as most kerbs and roadsides appeared clean and neatly swept. We were particularly impressed with the appearance of the bottle banks that were seen at the Supervalu Car Park, the Post Office and at the entrance to the beach as all of them were clean and tidy. Improvements remain possible however as a number of signs in different locations appeared in need of attention. For example, the yield sign at the roundabout close to the Supervalu car park was badly faded and a sign pole with no sign could be seen close to the entrance of Riverwalk and Danville court. A black and white sign pole was missing its sign close to the Maples while two sign poles with no sign was located on the footpath directly outside the Glor na Mara Community Garden.

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

The vast majority of residential estates and streets in Bundoran looked particularly well during adjudication. It was noted that a good number have provided standardised black timber tiered planters at their entrances with Gaelic Park looking very well with its entrance planting and trimmed grass areas. Attractive bright blue planters could also be seen at the entrance to the Portbeg Holiday Homes while Lisadell Avenue and White Maple estate also impressed. The modern estate beside Armada cottages could be improved by providing a name sign and removing the large rusty steel uprights that can be found at its entrance. It was noted that the majority of residential areas relied on planters with seasonal bedding plants for landscaping and we recommend that areas for permanent beds should be identified within different estates. These permanent beds could then be used to accommodate the bee and butterfly seed mix that has been so successful in the community garden. A best presented residential area competition should also be considered for Bundoran. It is noted that funding has been sought from Donegal County Council for new bilingual signage and wish you every success with this application.

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

The standard of presentation of approach roads were generally good and it was clear during our visit that they are the subject of regular maintenance by your committee and volunteers. The standard of surfacing is particularly high and virtually no weed could be spotted at roadsides or kerbs. In addition, all signage was clean and visible. You are also commended on the use of standardised signage with the brown tidy towns signs (with landscaping beneath) spotted on three of the key approach roads into your town. However, vigilance is needed to ensure that temporary and informal signage (to advertise businesses or events) is strictly controlled as these structures often look untidy and many are left in position long after they have served their purpose. Using the tidy towns signs to accommodate

other signs (such as on the Ballyshannon Road) should also be avoided. We were interested to see that there is signage in place to advertise cycle routes throughout the town and we wondered if any work has been done (either by your committee or by businesses) to estimate the numbers who are visiting Bundoran by bike? Given the success of cycling holidays in West Mayo and on the Waterford Greenway, this sector of the tourism market should be seriously considered for Bundoran as it is likely to have significant potential for growth. It is noted that future projects are proposed to improve the Sligo approach and to provide new welcome signage on all approaches. We would appreciate updates on these projects next year.

Concluding Remarks:

We were most impressed by the projects that have been completed and the work that has been done by the Committee and volunteers in Bundoran and this year. It was clear during a visit that you are continuing to make significant progress and we look forward to seeing further improvements 2020. Keep up the good work!