

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Donnybrook** Ref: **1346**
County: **Dublin** Mark: **253**
Category: **B** Date(s): **22/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	33	33
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	24	24
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	8	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45	46
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	32
TOTAL MARK	450	243	253

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you very much for the filled up entry form and map of your area. I did not receive a plan. It is strongly recommended that each group should draw up a three to five year plan of work to be done. This does not need to be an elaborate document, and only work that you are capable of doing should be planned. Where possible professional advice should be obtained and adhered to during works. You could organise a general meeting of all parties in the area and ask the people to put forward proposals of what they would like to be done in your place. At a second meeting your TidyTowns group could refine all the proposals, and this could be your plan for the next few years. Reading through the entry form I found that you have from time to time stated your plans which in fairness are realistic, but these should be part of your overall plan.

I had some initial difficulties in finding the different places outlined in the entry form, and was delighted to meet Seán Brennan. He very kindly gave me Donnybrook Walking Trail Map and Guide which was a huge help. Later on he gave me a document "Idea's for 2015 and beyond" which has four excellent strategic plans, as follows;
1 The Civic Square / Crescent, 2 Traffic Island Planters within the village boundaries, 3 Welcome signs at village boundaries and 4 Natural floral bed location at the obelisk.

The plan and map that I got from Seán override the slight problems encountered initially.

My preference for the plan is to concentrate firstly on the Welcome signs which could perhaps have a theme for Donnybrook, but not commercial, and you all know how best to proceed. I advise you to get permission from the relevant roads authority with regards to planning, safety etc. And finally have it bilingual.

I read that you are currently preparing for the Governance Code of Ireland, but unfortunately I could not link on to this as adjudicators do not have facilities for this when out doing assessments.

I note you have a core group of around twenty volunteers and you had a re-launch in April embracing all sections of the community. It is positive to have these contacts with the other groups in the area and this helps to have a common goal for the creation of a better and safer place to live in.

Your activities are positively recognised by the support that you are receiving from the associations that you have listed plus the Resident's groups and the local people are well informed of your activities.

It is pleasing to find that business and resident's groups have come together to help organise events.

This is a very good approach to the competition.

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

There is a very impressive built environment mostly along the very busy Morehampton and Donnybrook roads also known as the N11 making mostly a linear core to your lovely village. The Church of the Sacred Heart is beautiful in

every way with the impressive stained glass windows the highlight of which is the rose one to the front. It also contains a beautiful tower, and is built in splendid cut stones; this church is a credit to the people of Donnybrook. The Royal Hospital viewed from outside the splendid entrance is very well presented.

A special treat for me was my visit to Donnybrook Castle which I learned is the home of Religious Sisters of Charity; I knew a bit about that wonderful person Mother Mary Aikenhead who actually founded the Sisters of Charity and she is honoured with a magnificent vault in the graveyard. An impressive list of everyone buried there is on public display. There are some really special buildings in this area.

A stroll through Donnybrook old Graveyard revealed unexpected delights of really ancient headstones and vaults and I congratulate the local people for its presentation and your energetic attempts to remove the Ivy that is doing a lot of damage to the outstanding traditional stone boundary wall. There are a few volunteer saplings that could be removed. Any works done here should only be undertaken in conjunction with, and the permission of, the conservation Officer of the local County Council and the OPW.

Ivy should only be removed if it is liable to do damage to a structure such as this wall; it will become weaker if cut at the butt of a wall and will continue to grow feeding off the limestone up further, but it will die if cut at the base of a tree as it does not feed off the actual tree.

Donnybrook school and St Mary's Youth Club are well presented and I admired the attractive timber water harvesting set up at the front.

All the business houses are presented to a high standard with O'Connell's standing out at the corner adorned with attractive flowers, and Kiely's was also suitably festooned with nice flowers. Items for sale were displayed on a footpath outside a shop and this could pose a risk for partially sighted persons or people with prams and biggies. The old fashioned water trough and the Obelisk stand out as we drive along.

The Garda Station is a great traditional cut stone structure; it looks a bit dull and could do with some kind of a freshening up of its appearance, but could be considerably brightened up with the provision of a few window boxes of flowers.

The only blemish found in Donnybrook was the large building across from the Garda Station which stands out and we look forward to its development.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You are the beneficiaries of the planting of many trees down through the years that have now matured to really outstanding specimens that give freshness and colour to this most attractive village and it is delightful to see that this policy still prevails today with some lovely young trees growing healthily, and providing interest and softening the appearance of all the buildings. A perfect example of this is admired outside the Rugby grounds. The Topaz garage had a nice shrubbery.

Well planted and well maintained planters are attractive at intervals.

I availed of the opportunity to visit Donnybrook Castle which is open to the public and here we are treated to splendid landscaping of large lawns, a variety of shrubs and trees with lots of Nepata attracting the bees and this plant is loved by the butterflies. Tarmac paths provide lovely walks around the grounds. A visit to the garden at the Mary Aikenhead day-care centre was a great experience and it was most enjoyable to see the flowers and shrubs planted in a professional manner and maintained in great condition, surrounding the splendid oak carvings. The workmanship throughout the entire convent grounds was of a very high standard.

Donnybrook Plaza looked great with the planters, mature trees and nice grassed area at the back and the sculptures of sheep and pigs add to the aesthetics here. I felt that the white back wall at this location could be further adorned with the provision of a few suitable creeping shrubs such as heder helix gold child, but you could get advice on this from the local garden nursery.

Herbert Park is a great facility maintained by Dublin City Council Parks Department.

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

On arrival in Donnybrook I saw the An Taisce bird sanctuary with an impressive entrance but it was closed to the public. This is an important site in this busy urban area and the birds reared here have outstanding cover and food from the splendid trees all around plus the Dodder river banks. While admiring the work that is underway on the Iron Bridge at Beaver Row I was pleased to see some fish in the river and this tells us that there is no pollution at this point of the Dodder. There are some splendid wildflowers on the river banks and elsewhere reminding us that they too have a role to play and I liked in particular red valerian and lots of Buddleia which is excellent for the butterflies. Speaking to a local man he told me that a heron rests on a few protruding stones in the river and appears to be well fed. In the distance I saw what appeared to be a dipper keeping a keen eye on the waters below.

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

You have made good progress with water harvesting and I note you have plans to roll out further initiatives. Your contact with the local playschool is appreciated and helps to get the message across to the schoolchildren from the start. I am wondering if the local schools are involved in the green flag projects as this raises the awareness of the teachers, pupils and parents on the best ways to protect the local environment. The promotion of composting and recycling at Donnybrook Heritage Community Garden are applauded.

I am setting out hereunder some other initiatives that your group could consider, but whatever about all this initial information you could keep it all simple by looking at what is happening in the green flag programmes and work towards their goals, and pick out some points from below

The EU Waste Management Hierarchy is elimination, reduction, reuse, recycle and there are many ways of doing all of this. Carrying out some sort of waste awareness survey or distributing a questionnaire would give people a starting point in terms of waste prevention. Groups can take many steps to reduce the level of resources used and become more efficient at using materials, while at the same time reducing waste generation. Bulk buying and

avoiding disposable products, using local libraries and repairing goods are all ways of being more resource efficient. With the children involved in the excellent green schools initiatives we can study what they are doing in the schools and carry it forward ourselves. All the trees have huge amounts of leaves in the autumn / winter and most of this could be collected and composted. Composting is the way forward and you could further educate the people on how best to do this, by for instance, holding a workshop that demonstrates that to achieve the best results we must mix green kitchen waste with brown waste like hedge clippings, and also by turning it occasionally; more information is available on this from the county council. Compost reduces the amount of waste going to landfill, and produces good material for the vegetable and flower gardens, plus it cuts down on spending money on such like material. The collection of scrap metal from householders such as old steel beds, wheelbarrows, bicycles, gates, galvanised iron etc and bringing it to central point could earn money for your activities as there are plenty registered dealers in scrap metal who could buy it from you, and reduce the risk of it being thrown in ditches etc.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

I read in the entry form that the public streets are cleaned daily by Dublin City Council and this was confirmed as I walked about the area, and all involved in this work are heartily congratulated as the area was spotlessly clean and orderly. Weed control was excellent and your Gum Litter campaign is proven to be a great success. The litter bins were well serviced. It is noticeable that the local people adopt a responsible attitude to tidiness of public areas and their houses. Unfortunately there were a lot of places that were disfigured with graffiti as it was on walls like outside the wildlife sanctuary, on signposts, on a litter bin and so on, but it was not found on any of the business houses. But Donnybrook is no different from lots of other parts of the country in this respect.

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

There are some outstanding residential estates that are presented in excellent condition and the high standard is maintained and greatly helped by the resident's group's annual garden competitions. There is a distinct pride of place attitude adopted by the people with some really splendid individual houses with lawns, flowers, shrubs and trees. It is not possible for me to mention them all but from one of the biggest namely Donnybrook Manor with extensive green open spaces outstanding shrubs, trees and flowers all very well presented to a smaller residential street Belmont Avenue with the Edwardian houses which are real beauties and I loved the floral arrangements at number 8. There are many other splendid settings notably the red brick houses on Morehampton road and Marlborough road. A mature beech tree in Donnybrook Manor appears surprisingly to have failed and unfortunately it seems that it will have to be taken out in an orderly fashion rather than it falling in high winds later on.

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

The N11 is a very busy road with all that traffic heading towards the Southeast and back and dividing the parish. The footpaths are in very good condition with cycle lanes in both directions. There are splendid aesthetics of lines of trees at the roadsides.

Road signage and markings assist the flow of traffic. While I was on the N11 I noticed quite a lot of busses going in and out of the City thereby reducing the amount of cars. The same high standard applies to the side roads. Parking seemed to be a problem for all the motorists. The plaque at the corner of Beaver Row and Beech Hill gives good information on the first All Ireland football final played at Beech Hill on 29th April 1888 between Limerick Commercials and Dundalk Young Irelands with Limerick winners 1 4 to 0 3.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Donnybrook and spend a few hours amongst your people. I was delighted to meet Seán Brennan and he really loves Donnybrook.