

Allenwood Tidy Towns

Secretary's Report 2018

This year we received the Endeavour Award for a score of 219 points. This was awarded for our increase of 19 points from the 2016 score. The biggest percentage increase in Kildare.

We placed bottom of the category B villages, and possibly will do for a few years. However, as a newcomer we are in the position of having a lot of ways to increase our score if we continue to follow the advice of the judging panel and continue coming up with ideas to implement. It is important that we don't focus on our position in the rankings but more on simply increasing our score each year.

| CATEGORY B | MARK |
|-------------|------|
| Broadford | 316 |
| Ardclough | 310 |
| Kilmeade | 303 |
| Calverstown | 300 |
| Derrinturn | 270 |
| Nurney | 261 |
| Robertstown | 259 |
| Suncroft | 254 |
| Ballitore | 248 |
| Narraghmore | 247 |
| Kilmeague | 230 |
| Coilidubh | 224 |
| Allenwood | 219 |

It will be difficult to see a massive increase again, given the level of work that 2017 was a really productive year for us. We implemented many really good improvements that are still in place and will hopefully at least help us maintain our score.

One way to get an increase in score is to address the comments of the judging panel, and we intend to do that in some capacity this year. Some of the projects we are working on originated directly from the judging panel comments in previous years and we hope they recognise that in 2018.

The following projects were worked on in the last year and some of these will be presented in our entry for 2018.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan is consistently mentioned by the judging panel. The panel wants evidence that we have a long term plan as well as our short term plan.

Our Strategic Plan has been in development for some time and we now believe it will be ready to submit with our application in 2018. It is not clear how valuable the plan will be in terms of points, but it is definitely something the judging panel expect to see and we expect it to be beneficial.

Website

The importance of the website is that the community can use it to keep up to date on the projects we are working on. We know from Facebook that we have tremendous support from the community. When we received the Endeavour award, the announcement on our Facebook page received over 100 likes and we had many comments commending the work of our group. A website is more suited for providing information on long term projects to the community and many other Tidy Towns groups have one. It can do us no harm to have one and hopefully a lot of good.

Our website was set up this year at the URL www.allenwoodtidytowns.ie and needs to be finalised before the submission for 2018 so that the judges would see that it is up to date if they were to check it. It is hoped that this will be done in time for the submission.

Playground

The playground is an interesting project because it's difficult to see how it slots into the judging criteria of the Tidy Towns competition. It is a community project and it is well supported by the community and it can be seen to attract members to the Tidy Towns group so it might be worth mentioning in the application the current status of this project.

The project is moving relatively slowly but still making constant progress. In 2017, a panel of interested members of the community was assembled following the meeting in Allenwood GAA Hall. At the agreement of the Parks Superintendent in Kildare County Council, Simon Wallace, quotations were obtained from four landscape architects and provided to him. Just this week, Simon Wallace, has asked for a meeting at the playground site with one of the architects so it seems like he has made the selection of the architect and is ready to proceed with the designs.

Grand Canal

Our most valuable local amenity could possibly be the Grand Canal and we have a couple of projects ongoing in relation to the canal.

Michelle is working very closely with Community Water Officer of Kildare County Council, Aoife McGrath, in relation to the Canal Walkway project originally suggested by Nuala Madigan, the Education Officer with the Irish Peatland Conservation Council in Lullymore. Aoife has already started to have an input into this project and it would be a big one on our strategic plan.

We also mentioned during the year the possibility of a circular walkway which would be completed by a path from the cross to the Skew Bridge and we will evaluate community interest in this over the coming year.

We have also outlined a plan to install signs on the canal banks describing wildlife in the canals and Michelle has had conversations with Nuala Madigan and Waterways Ireland about this particular project.

Estate Signs in Irish

The signs for Woodlawns, The Willows and Whitethorn Park are all in the English language only. The judging panel commented about this before and suggested that we have them done in Irish too. We have contacted the Resident's Association and have approval from two associations and the third need some time to discuss it. We will continue to keep in contact with the resident's associations and attempt to get this project done.

Recycle / Reuse

On the theme of recycling and reusing, one of our members made a seat from an old electrical cable reel and we had it mounted at the Cross for use by the general public. It is popular with the many cyclists that visit our village and looks great too.



Mural

Late last year we rejuvenated the wall beside Sanita's takeaway with a beautiful mural. It was completed by Down To Earth Community Arts with the financial assistance of Kildare County Council. It is a great example of how we can find ways to brighten up the community with art and we are looking at other opportunities to repeat this type of project in 2018.



Bluetown Road

Local landscaper, Donal Leavy, created a flower bed for us at the top of the Bluetown Road. This area was identified as perfect for such a display and Donal kindly volunteered his time and resources to assist the Tidy Towns.



Locomotive

We are trying to locate an old Bord na Mona Locomotive for use as a monument in the village. Possibly on the Derrymullen Road. We contacted Pat Flynn, the Resources Manager for AES Drehid and he said he will try to locate one. We will continue to follow up with Pat in relation to this.

Wildflower Garden / Insect Hotel

We are always looking for ways to get the local community groups, such as Scoil Mhuire National School and the Allenwood Beavers, involved with our projects. We have identified a perfect location for a wildflower garden and insect hotel on Station Road and we are going to work with the relevant leaders of the school and beavers to see if they would be interested in helping with this project. We should push to get this done for 2018's submission if possible.

Birds

We are going to talk to Nuala Madigan about some ideas we have for bird boxes and having a birdwatch event for the local community. Again, another way of involving the community and looking out for our wildlife too.

Christmas Festival

Our now annual Christmas Festival is a huge success every year. There is so much work behind the scenes on this and even I don't know all the people that are involved. I only understood the scale of the organisation behind this at the meetings this year and I am blown away by the work being done. Thanks to everyone that works on this in any way. It is the single most successful event in Allenwood for getting the community together and the fact that it is associated with the Tidy Towns is a massive boost in public support for us.

National Spring Clean

Recently we organised the National Spring Clean for our area again. The response from the community was great, as usual. This year it was even more noticeable that people were doing their bit outside their own homes and on their own roads. It seems that every year more people are getting involved and hopefully we start to get some volunteers as a result of the Spring Clean.

The Future

We always need new ideas and we are a very lucky group to have so much great ideas coming forward from our members. It's important to recognise that everyone's input to the Tidy Towns group is welcome. Even the smallest suggestion can lead to something big. At each meeting we hear some great new ideas and we have no shortage of projects that we can do.

Please keep an eye out for areas in the village that we can improve and keep coming up with great ideas. We might not get everything done but having lots of stuff to do is good work in itself.

Thanks,
Brendan