



Landscaping Works and Floral Displays

The range and quality of new projects undertaken is overwhelming and it is difficult to know where to start or how to do justice in describing them. Perhaps we should start with your Big Ticket project which is undoubtedly Ginney's Pond where a new entrance has been created from the Church Car Park to facilitate safe and convenient access. We absolutely love the bespoke Corten Steel entrance sign, the additional planting and the newly created pathways and resurfacing of existing pathways. The Pond Dipping Platform is a great installation and, of course, the Ecology Trail sign at the Viewing Platform provides the background story to the site and highlights its diverse biodiversity. Some projects can be unthinkingly taken for granted but when you have outcomes like the development of this Nature Park it would be impossible to take anything for granted. Notwithstanding the superb work completed to date it is indisputable that this project has the potential to be the jewel in your crown with future phased development creating a priceless amenity and we can only imagine what it will be like in a few short years. With such immense potential it is important to have a plan for the short, medium and long term development of the overall site in its transformation into a Nature Park. You are very lucky to have, in your volunteer base, specialised horticultural advice and practical input and you have certainly taken every opportunity to capitalise on this. Over the last number of years you have elevated your landscaping

programme to a standard that almost defies description. A recent example, and one of many, of this is the new landscaping along both sides of the lengthy driveway to the Church car park which is astonishing due to its length, breadth and plant choice and will be a cause for celebration as it develops further – such perennial schemes, by their nature, take time and patience to realise their full potential but it will be so worth the wait in terms of the long term impact it will provide. Indeed it is already most eye-catching with elephant's ear, ceanothus, echinacea, wallflower, lavender, nepeta and rudbeckia providing great bursts of colour among the ornamental grasses. Well done on incorporating the planting of silver birch and scots pine trees in a small woodland area at the roadside entrance. The latest chapter in the development of the Heritage Park sees the installation of an Ogham Stone, another of your bespoke Book Signs and a new one for us – an Audio Unit providing an oral account of the history of the community. The Ogham





Stone involved extensive research and attention to detail in the highlighting of the key historical dates in your community while the new Book Sign is beautifully illustrated and provides so much information on the Birds and the Bees and the Butterflies. We love the play on words in the title and are most impressed with the information included and the awareness it must surely create. It was lovely to see that one of your more senior residents provided the voiceover for the Audio Unit – a wonderful age friendly way to undertake this excellent project. The existing elements of the Park are beautifully presented and impeccably maintained so it was no surprise to us to hear that you retained the prestigious Community Green Flag Award for a second year. If we were impressed with the Audio Unit in the Heritage Park then we were surely doubly impressed with the interesting and engaging commentary in the second Unit provided outside the graveyard whose engrossing commentary is provided by one of your Junior Tidy Towns members asking questions about the history of the Monastic Site and the Vikings with the responses given by a more mature resident. Brilliant! We can only imagine the effort it took to research and edit the script and then



record it but not just in English but also as Gaelige – Maith Síbh! We were so impressed with your trio of Mini Bee Gardens – these novel features are small but extremely effective interventions and a great way to promote pollination and encourage the Pots for Pollinators concept in the wider community. Men's Shed must be congratulated on the construction of these attractive and robust containers and what can we say about the simply gorgeous artwork which transformed them into things of beauty even before the planting of pollinator friendly plants that were attracting buzzing bees on adjudication day! The same talented artists are, we understand, also responsible for your street art installations on formerly drab and nondescript walls which are captivating and cheer up their locations in splendid style by adding vitality, creativity and visual interest to their locations. Your dramatic sunflower mural at the Linencare site and the Cuchulainn mural in the school grounds has recently been joined by another stunning floral themed mural on the Credit Union Wall. Your fence art project, in the Incredible Edible Garden, is an excellent demonstration of the possibilities presented by unwanted materials when creativity is applied to their reuse. The transformation of hubcaps into





decorative floral features at this location and also along the boundary of the Dreamtime Garden and Outdoor Classroom is a great way to engage children in upcycling projects under supervision and it certainly has produced dramatic results. The Incredible Edible Garden appeared as very productive this year with fruit laden trees and bushes together with raised vegetable and herb plots being clear evidence of its ongoing success. The Composting Corner is home to your Tumbler Composter and Interpretative Signage highlighting the different home composting methods available to households and a further sign providing tips on how to Reduce Food Waste. The Green Infrastructure Map Panel, flanked by two trios of floral sculptures, is informative and attractive while the kerbed beds in the car park are home to a good variety of perennials set in a gravelled base which was weed free. The linear bed at the rear of the car park, along the boundary with Ginnety's Pond, has developed really well with decorative grasses being a lovely counterfoil to the catmint, hydrangea and lilies that were the key plants in the landscaping. The use of locally sourced tree mulch on this bed assists sustainable weed management while adding to the visual presentation of the feature as the plants continue to mature. The Dreamtime Garden is standing the test of time and looked very well again this year and we absolutely loved the wavin pipe containers which have been

decoratively painted with Avatar designs by the young Climate Ambassadors in the school. You have created a network of publicly accessible green spaces that lead people around diverse habitats such as natural stone walls, native hedgerows, trees, perennial planting schemes and pocket parks. The Credit Union Garden impressed again with a high standard of maintenance clearly evident, a large No Mow Zone provides a perfect balance to the more formal perennial planting arrangements and well done on replacing the damaged pergola which is a lovely feature in the garden. The impossibly lofty and quite beautiful blue cypress tree is an outstanding feature in the AOH Garden which is also home to your Ring a Rosy sculpture, tyre planting arrangement, mature trees and a significant Wild and Free area to support wildlife. The Medieval Garden outside the monastic site



was maintained to an exceptionally high standard while the crossroads bed is well designed, colourful and as pleasing to the eye as ever. Lawlor's Garden enjoys a wonderful setting and was presented to perfection. The Church grounds presented well with the formal bed of apricot roses and a bed of primarily shasta daisies being the perfect complement to the regal Church. The Biblical Garden has undergone the first phase of its refurbishment and looked really well. Your seasonal hotspots of colour were a delight with hanging baskets a tumbling mass of red and blue blooms with that planting scheme carried through to all your container planting including the glorious flower towers that guard the pedestrian entrance to the Church. How could we leave mentioning the Phone Box installation until now! It not alone adds to



the streetscape in its village centre location but gives a nod to times past while having a current use as an Information Point for the display of your many information leaflets. Your village flags were flying high at the Co-Op Field and the lovely planting in the tiered planters has created a nice focal point at this prominent



location while allowing you to dedicate the remainder of the site to nature with a clearly defined No Mow Zone. The eye-catching No Mow Zone signs explain the reasons for the long grass and, over time, native species of wildflowers will dominate the area and indeed are already starting to do so creating an attractive and beneficial habitat. The Herb Garden at Centra has been upgraded and extended resulting in what we can only describe as a Quirky Corner of visual treats. The units for the flourishing herbs were freshly painted in the same sage green colour as the new Mini Bee Garden installed on site and with the addition of your Leaky Boots and upcycled Chair Planters really was a splendid presentation. Beautifully designed and maintained signage pays homage to the community's heritage and ecology. The Heritage Trail, with its 16 points of interest, adds a further dimension to what the village has to offer and well done on replacing a few of the signs that had become a little faded as a result of weather damage. The signed Sculpture Trail is full of artistic treats providing the background stories on such impressive public art features including the stone Viking Boat, the Bog Oak Birds Eye View, the Slip Sliding Away Slide Sculpture and the wonderful Animal Magic Horse and Dog Sculpture. The nearby Bee Positive Garden was just coming into its second bloom of the season but the buddleia plants in the Butterfly Garden were full of colourful blooms. Your tall, elegant SuDS trees, set in attractive paving, really add to the ambiance of the Chapel Road in proximity to the Heritage Park. The updated Village Map panel is a great resource for visitors and certainly encourages exploration of the increasing number of visitor attractions in the village and, of course, your Places and Spaces sign provides an interesting recollection of the village's origins highlighting place names which have much historical value.





Appearance of Approach Roads

While slightly outside the 50km speed limit the Commons Cross is, of course, the main arrival point for the village. How lovely, therefore, that a local volunteer has adopted this area and transformed it into a welcoming arrival by making a wonderful Viking Bird House set in a vibrant planting arrangement that he planted and maintains. How lucky are you with the support you get for your tidy towns programme! Closer to the village all approaches are marked by hand crafted bespoke wooden heritage themed signs set in stone surround beds of wonderful colourful perennials supplemented by border of seasonal planting. All verges are very well maintained with tree planting incorporated where space allows. The entrance beds at Jack's Hill were in the process of being refurbished on adjudication day with the sleeper surrounds replaced by a new stylish border of Elite Form low decorative panels. Limited planting had taken place while you await the development of a new landscaping plan – a wonderful project with long term benefits.



Individual Contributions – Residential/ Business

The sense of pride in the estates visited is not to be questioned and it was a delight, despite the inclement weather, to amble through a few to witness the high standard that prevails. Your collaboration with the residents of Church View has replaced large mown areas of grass with a rich tapestry of colourful, pollinator friendly, blooms including rudbeckia, echinacea, ceanothus, lamb's ear, lavender, nepeta and grasses with the overall arrangement including additional tree planting and a wonderful Insect Hotel. Similar planting was undertaken at Bealach an Tuir where a Corten Steel name sign was also provided. It is lovely to see similar planting themes at all roadside estate entrances! The Hamlet was very well presented with maturing trees on the estate green and landscaped beds maintained and presented to a high standard. There was evidence of relatively recent, well staked, tree planting on the green area in Rath na Gloine with the name sign set in a weed free shrub bed at the entrance. Its lovely to see Commons Grove extending its efforts to the roadside verge at the pedestrian entrance which looked great with its lovely wildflower swathe. The sculptural pieces on the walls at the entrance to Inis Linn are most impressive but we felt that the overall presentation of this estate lacked the usual attention to detail this year. Conversely St. Ronan's Villas looked the best we have ever seen it and we hope that this standard will continue. Individual residences in the village centre and along approach roads make a valuable contribution to the overall presentation. A couple of the Inis Linn residences along the Commons Road were particularly striking as was an adjacent red brick bungalow. Gardens on Chapel Road competed with each other for well deserved recognition and the two semi-detached dwellings at





Chapel Cross were picture postcard pretty. A garden on Main Street, enclosed, by a stone boundary wall, was quite lovely with its mature garden planting supplemented by colourful borders. Daniel's Take-Away was beautifully presented boasting the same stunning hanging baskets displayed in public spaces. Centra was spic and span with wonderful hanging baskets co-ordinating with those used throughout the village but it was surprising to see the two ground level planters at the fuel pumps were unplanted –

they would be better removed than remaining on site without any plants. It is a real shame to see Mulligan's Shop closed but thankfully the building still facilitates the Post Office which keeps it in productive use rather than potentially falling into disrepair. The planting in the car park exuded lovely warm colour primarily from roses. Herity's Pub occupies a key location in the village and it's visual impact could be significantly enhanced with a fresh coat of paint.

Overall Impact

Your tidy towns programme stands out for its community spirit and the number of ways individuals and other groups have worked together on various projects and initiatives. There is also no doubting the organisational capabilities of your committee and your ability to maintain existing projects to an exceptionally high standard while availing of all funding opportunities to complete new projects. Dromiskin's time has come! Your outstanding range of new projects together with, very crucially this year, your exemplary maintenance programme has left us with no option but to say congratulations on being the Overall Winner of Louth Looking Good 2023!

