

Silver for Celbridge – Even Better to Come

“A really excellent entry that speaks volumes of your commitment and dedication to making Celbridge better.”

That’s how the adjudicators summed up this year’s entry by Celbridge Tidy Towns which earned it a silver medal for the first time in its 22 years of participation in the competition.

Chairman of Celbridge Tidy Towns Committee, Michael Connolly, said that this win is not only a great achievement and a tribute to the amount work being done in the area, but it is also an incentive to work towards even greater progress in the future. Many of the local projects that were praised by the adjudicators are very much work in progress and their full effect has yet to be seen. These include the flagship Village Enhancement Project, involving the undergrounding of unsightly cables, removal of poles and other street clutter and installation of attractive street furniture in keeping with the historic ambience of the Village. Similarly, projects in the pipeline include a Centenary Garden at the Maynooth Road entrance to the town, and improvement of the Castletown Gate/Slip area and in the vicinity of the Mill and Liffey Bridge, which will further enhance the Village centre and, bring a greater focus on the River Liffey as a natural centrepiece of the Village’s life.

Celbridge’s 2015 Tidy Towns application can be viewed at www.celbridgetidytowns.com/ along with the adjudicators’ report and the Tidy Towns Committee’s 5-Year Plan, which details the above projects and a further ambitious programme for the coming years. The work of the Tidy Towns Committee is not just about trying to make the area look pretty. There is also a huge social and economic dividend to be gained from enhancing the physical character and quality of life of an area. As acknowledged by the adjudicators, Celbridge Tidy Towns has been working very hard to advance the cause of Celbridge in the context of a range of important plans and strategies that are currently being developed. Already this year, substantial submissions were made in relation to the new Local Area Plan and the Kildare Local Economic and Social Plan. Members of the Committee have also played a lead role in the formulation of a Celbridge Heritage Tourism Strategy which is due to be launched shortly under the auspices of the local Heritage Tourism Forum which was established during the past year. The Strategy sets out a framework to capitalise on the inherent assets of the area in terms of heritage, history, amenities and strategic location.

Michael also drew attention to the scope for improvement in a number of respects, listing 4 issues in particular as important to further success:

1. Greater public participation in the tidy towns effort – there are currently some 50 to 60 volunteers responsible for on-street work, fund-raising, engagement with relevant agencies and administration and project development. Clearly there is scope for a greater level of participation from a population of over 20,000. The Tidy Towns Committee will be looking at how it can get across its message more effectively and improve its engagement with the community. The Committee are encouraging as many people as possible to attend its local awards night in Celbridge Library on 22nd October, which will also be an opportunity to celebrate the success in the national competition.
2. Continued leadership and action on the part of public representatives and organisations, including the provision of greater resources for the projects set out in the 5-year plan and also to address some environmental black spots in the area. The advent of the new

Celbridge-Leixlip Municipal District should help Celbridge build on the momentum of this year's success. As budget time approaches, councillors are invited to bear this in mind.

3. Support from the local business community. Many of the business and private premises in the village have been improved by painting and general maintenance in the past year. Celbridge Tidy Towns is calling on the Local Business Community for a concerted campaign against inappropriate signage, especially in the Village. The presence of inappropriate signage and posterage detracts from the overall presentation of the village and is not conducive to the development of Celbridge as a heritage tourism village and hinders economic development.
4. Resolve by every citizen in Celbridge to eradicate the blight of litter and particularly to instil that ethic in young people from a very early age. Schools have a key role here and Tidy Towns acknowledge the great work being done in the schools, seven of whom are involved in the Green Flag programme. Of course, learning begins at home and we encourage all the residents to become more conscious of littering and recycling. Earlier this summer Kildare County Council at the request of Tidy Towns had the village Main St cleaned of chewing gum, and we hope that people will in future bin their gum. A very real problem which needs to be addressed is the presence of dog faeces on the streets of the village and estates. Dog lovers in particular are reminded that the "dog poo fairy" does not collect those little plastic bags left by the side of the road or thrown in the hedges.

In winning the silver medal in 2015, Celbridge has increased its points total in the Tidy Towns competition for the 9th year in a row, building on bronze medals in 2013 and 2014. The Committee are looking forward to even greater things in the future and, Michael added, as the results of our work become more visible to everyone, we would hope that there will be even greater public participation, in working towards a shared vision of making Celbridge a highly desirable location to visit, live, work, or do business.

|