

PRESS RELEASE 16th November 2023

**Red Carpet for Green Communities**

On Monday 13th November the Wexford County Council Annual Environment Awards were held at the Ferrycarrig Hotel and proved to be a tremendous celebration of the environment and voluntary effort.

Over 250 children, community groups, volunteers, resident groups and individuals turned up on the night to see their wonderful efforts acknowledged by Wexford County Council.

On a night which clearly the elected members also enjoyed, given the presence of so many county councillors from all parts of the county, there were presentations and awards to 11 schools, 63 community groups and 2 individuals.

Councillor John Fleming, Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council, warmly welcomed and congratulated all the participants and went on to recognise the commitment and dedication of all committees and individuals who make such a real difference at a local level. He stated ‘It is heartening to see groups of local volunteers showing such spirit and endeavour and, in the process inspiring others in their community to follow their example. The unselfish effort and the generosity displayed by you as volunteers really is making a difference to communities. Your dedication is an inspiration to communities everywhere and illustrates the real benefits of pulling together for the greater good of the place we call home.’

Carolyne Godkin, Director of Services said ‘I’m struck not only by the level of commitment you make on a voluntary basis but also the quality and diversity of work being carried out and indeed the creativity and innovation we see form you as dedicated local volunteers. It is the hours you spend in your communities that enhances our County, helps Keep Wexford Beautiful and ensures that we continue to be known as The Model County.’

There were many notable highlights. Tomhaggard Clean Coasts Group were presented with a plaque for winning the Community Group Snap Into Action competition. Hollyfort Development Group, The Gap Tidy Towns & Heritage Group, and Askamore Community Council / Tidy Towns were also presented with awards for their participation in the North Wexford 2K.

A ‘Sort Of ‘ Environment Quiz kept all guessing at the beginning of the night and prizes to the first 6 correct answers drawn were presented. Winners drawn were Catherine Redmond, Aleksandra Perek, John Woodbyrne Clodagh Roche, Fionn Quirke and Grace McCormack.

The overall winners of the Keep Wexford Beautiful Competition were Blackwater Tidy Towns, Master of Ceremonies for the night, Alan McGuire, stated as he announced this award that ‘It’s not surprising that Blackwater Village is the Overall Winner in the Keep Wexford Beautiful Awards 2023, having already won Gold in the National Tidy Towns competition.

A warm welcome is extended to all, with colourful planting augmenting the charm of this seaside village. Blackwater Tidy Towns Group has been working hard since the 1950s to show how Blackwater is a beautiful place to live in, to work in, and to visit. An ecologist was commissioned to produce a biodiversity action plan. This plan is now being implemented through a variety of exciting projects, including cataloguing rare plant species and a ‘Grow With Us’ project which involves young students growing their own acorn or chestnut trees which will be presented to them for planting out in their final year at school. As the river flows gently under the ancient bridge it leads to the Millrace wildlife area, where informative signage offers a variety of walkway options to suit both the casual and seasoned rambler.

It’s worth pausing as you stroll along the Millrace walk to observe the Swift nest-boxes high up on the gable end of an old stone mill. And this is just one example of the many fine buildings in the area. Barn Owl boxes have also been installed in an effort to help this endangered species. Additional perennial planting has taken place in the green spaces and 80% of this came from seeds saved from the previous year.

The sense of pride, belonging and a shared desire to present a thriving, colourful and environmentally-aware village is very evident in the achievements of Blackwater Tidy Towns Group.’

A group of people posing for a photo

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**Image (Credit: Jim Campbell) : Members of Blackwater Tidy Towns Committee , overall winners of the Keep Wexford Beautiful Competition with Cllr. Oliver Walsh; Cllr. Pip Breen (Cathaoirleach of Gorey Kilmuckridge Municipal District); Cllr Fionntán Ó Súilleabháin and Sheila Lacey, Wexford Co Co.**

The schools were well represented with eleven schools receiving presentations from Councillor John Fleming, Cathaoirleach of Wexford County Council. Coláiste Bríde, Enniscorthy, New Ross Educate Together National School and St Edan’s National School, Ferns were all recognised for receiving their first green flag and presented with a nest box sponsored by The Wexford Naturalists’ Field Club.

Coláiste an Atha, Kilmuckridge, Gorey Community School, Loreto Secondary School Wexford, Ramsgrange Community School and Selskar College were awarded certificates for their participation in the Rubbish Film Festival Programme.

Mercy School Wexford was awarded a Plaque as the overall primary school winner in the Christmas Decoration Competition 2022 in conjunction with South-East Radio for their group entry entitled ‘The Christmas Tree’. The entry was created by students Tomás Meyler, Fionn Quirke and Blake Thomas.

Ramsgrange Community School was recognised for their achievements on the National stage having won the WEEE Ireland schools battery recycling national competition in the medium secondary school category, collecting more batteries for recycling than any other school in the country in that category. A grand total of the equivalent of 82,200 AA batteries were collected for recycling by the school.

Certificates were presented to Conan Kelly, Wexford Educate Together National School who was the Overall Primary School Winner in the Environment Artwork Competition and Mikolaj Perek Coláiste an Atha, Kilmuckridge who was the overall secondary school winner of the Environment Artwork Competition.

Kilmyshall National School were also awarded a Plaque for being Wexford’s Cleanest School.

An Award for Outstanding Individual Contribution to Wexford’s Environment was presented to Catherine Redmond and Mary Cogley both worthy winners.

The whole event was wonderfully organised, expertly presented by Master of Ceremonies, Alan McGuire and enjoyed by everybody. The feeling leaving the Ferrycarrig Hotel was certainly one of satisfaction for work well done and roll on next year. The environment is in very good hands.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITOR:

**Environment Awards 2023 : Full List of Award Winners**

**GREEN SCHOOLS**

Coláiste Bríde, Enniscorthy

New Ross Educate Together National School, New Ross

St Edan’s National School, Ferns

**ANNUAL ENVIRONMENT ARTWORK COMPETITION**

Overall Primary School Winner – Conan Kelly, Wexford Educate Together National School

Overall Secondary School Winner – Mikolaj Perek, Coláiste an Átha, Kilmuckridge

**CHRISTMAS DECORATION COMPETITION**

in conjunction with South East Radio

Overall Primary School Winner – Mercy School, Wexford

**Rubbish Film Festival**

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| Coláiste an Átha, Kilmuckridge |
| Gorey Community School  Loreto Secondary School, Wexford  Ramsgrange Community School  Selskar College, Wexford |
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**School Battery Champion**

Ramsgrange Community School

**WEXFORD’S CLEANEST SCHOOL**

Kilmyshall National School

**SNAP INTO ACTION COMPETITION**

Community Group Winner – Tomhaggard Clean Coasts Group

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| **KEEP WEXFORD BEAUTIFUL COMPETITION**  **Overall Winner** Blackwater Tidy Towns  **Best Environmentally Aware and Presented Housing Estate**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1st | Westwinds Residents Association, Kilrane | | Joint 2nd | Carraig Dubh Residents Association. Blackwater | | Joint 2nd | Watch House Village Residents Group, Clonegal | | 3rd | Hazelwood Residents Association, Gorey | | Highly Commended | Bridgemeadow Residents Association | | Highly Commended | Ounavarra Park Residents Association, Ballycanew |   **Best Environmentally Aware and Presented Town/Village**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1st | Kilanerin Tidy Towns | | 2nd | Gorey Tidy Towns | | Joint 3rd | Kiltealy Tidy Towns | | Joint 3rd | Bunclody Tidy Towns | | Highly Commended | Ballyduff Development Group |   **Best Community Environment Initiative**  1st Enniscorthy Community Allotments  2nd Monageer Parish Grotto Group 3rd Rosslare Harbour Kilrane Environment Group  Highly Commended Clonard Area Development Association, Wexford  **Best Heritage Preservation & Conservation Project**  1st Duncormick Area Action CLG Joint 2nd Gorey Tidy Towns Joint 2nd Kilmuckridge Tidy Towns Joint 3rd Tomhaggard Pastoral Council Joint 3rd Ferns Tidy Towns Highly Commended Killanne Development Group  Highly Commended BallymurnTidy Towns  **Best Community Coastal Management Initiative**   1st Tomhaggard Clean Coasts Group  2nd Courtown Community Council 3rd Rosslare Harbour Kilrane Environment Group  **Best New Entry**  1st St Brendan’s Residents Association, Rosslare Harbour  2nd Community Of Oulart Women's Society  3rd Wexford Bat Group  Highly Commended Talbot Greenfingers, Wexford  Highly Commended Ballindaggin Development Group / Ballindaggin Tidy Towns  **Best Community Project To Improve Accessibility to Infrastructure**  1st Kiltealy Tidy Towns    **Best Community Project to Improve Accessibility in Gardens / Parks**  1st Taghmon Action Group  2nd Monageer Parish Grotto Group  3rd Gorey Tidy Towns  Highly Commended Foulksmills Tidy Towns  **Best Community Project That Tackles And Reduces the Impact Of Climate Change**  1st Sustainable Enniscorthy  2nd Ferns Tidy Towns  **Best Community Biodiversity Project**  1st Monageer Parish Grotto Group  2nd Enniscorthy Tidy Towns  Joint 3rd Bridgetown Community Development  Joint 3rd Kiltealy Tidy Towns  HC Clonegal Tidy Village Association  **Best Community Waste Prevention/Re-Use Project**  1st Tomhaggard Clean Coasts Group  2nd Foulksmills Tidy Towns  3rd Carrig on Bannow Tidy Towns  Highly commended Boolavogue Tidy Towns  **North Wexford 2K Clean**  1st Hollyfort Development Group  2nd The Gap Tidy Towns & Heritage Group  3rd Askamore Community Council/Tidy Towns  ***Outstanding Individual Contribution to Wexford’s Environment***  Mary Cogley, Catherine Redmond |