

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **St Mullins** Ref: **1155**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **282**
Category: **A** Date(s): **22/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	45	45
The Built Environment	50	34	35
Landscaping	50	37	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32	32
Litter Control	50	37	37
Tidiness	30	18	19
Waste Minimisation	20	9	9
Residential Areas	40	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	33
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	280	282

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome St. Mullins to the 2012 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your application form which was easy to read and well laid out with straightforward bullet points. The accompanying annotated map was also a great help to the adjudicator during the visit. You have an active TidyTowns committee of 7 members and receive assistance from other agencies that have an interest in maintaining and improving the wealth of natural and historical resources which surround your lovely village. The success you have in getting people to support your initiatives including your litter patrols is great to see and long may you continue to have this local support. Have you considered setting up an email newsletter to maintain contact with your occasional volunteers? You could pass around an email list at one of your community meetings and build up a database of people who can then be contacted with dates and times of meetings and also given updates on your works. Keeping links with these volunteers will be key to your ongoing success and the larger your available workforce, the easier it will be to complete tasks. To further progress in the competition we would encourage you to consider developing a longer term plan for the village. A simple 3 or 5 year plan can be a great tool to help you set out and achieve goals for your committee. A simple list can be turned into time bound targets which can then show people in your community how you hope to proceed and can even help you gain sponsorship. The plan is in effect the groups work programme and it should reflect the objectives and capabilities of the group. This will in turn help you gain additional marks in this category.

The Built Environment:

You have a charming village with a very neat core area and a wealth of historical and ecclesiastical sites and buildings of interest. How lovely to see the café thriving in the old grain store and the area to the front of Odlums House was cleared on adjudication day, which no doubt has greatly improved the appearance of the quay area. The adjoining mill complex has had an interesting mural which, although eye catching, is not quite what one would expect in such a lovely rural and peaceful setting. Perhaps it is only a short term display. We

note that in the report on the Barrow Corridor, which you included with the submission, the mill complex is earmarked as a possible site for an industrial heritage centre to highlight the former use of the canal. We look forward to progress on this. This could be included as one of your long term plans if you develop a village plan. St Mullins church and grounds were very well presented with the signage here neatly conveying the function of the various built elements in the church site without detracting from the serene setting.

Landscaping:

The village green at the Norman motte was well maintained but perhaps the plants in containers by the interpretative sign here would be better placed elsewhere in the village as they were somewhat out of scale. The pilgrim's park and path were also very well looked after and the new planting is thriving. As part of your landscape plan, try to concentrate on native trees and shrubs in future planting proposals and limit the more ornamental types to selected spots in the village core. Take the lead from some of the native plants found in the locality. Iris, foxglove, native rose and geraniums were all to be seen in the surrounding area and could form the basis for a distinctive planting palette for the village. Any new developments in the village, such as the planned graveyard extension, could look to this palette for guidance in any proposed planting works. The perennial plants to the base of the old stone graveyard wall on the approach from the quay were much admired on the adjudicators walk up the hill.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

With the historic sites and the Barrow River running through the village you have a wealth of habitats surrounding you. Much work has already been done by others in assessing the habitat types in the area. We would encourage you to look to the information contained in the Barrow Report and use this as a basis for compiling a habitat strategy for the area. A simple plan can be used to indicate areas such as the river, graveyard, tree groups, hedgerows, garden areas, meadows etc. This would help you identify key sites of interest and formulate plans to help improve biodiversity by intervention or management practices. In many cases the do nothing scenario is best and you can make sure that sensitive landscape are protected. Also consider expanding on the success of your guided walks to perhaps organise a night time bat walk or dawn chorus event. These are low impact activities that can do much to inform and bring the community together. It is good to see that the extension of the wildlife area by the motte also helps control visitor movement. Perhaps if some of the green area was left to develop as a wildflower meadow, with mowing restricted to margins or grass paths, it could also help with this visitor management?

Litter Control:

Well done to all of your volunteers as there was very little evident on adjudication day. A small amount of wind blown litter was noted in the car park by the quay but this looked recent and may well have been from day trippers. The barrow side path was also litter free. It is a pity that the litter bins have been sited right at the entrance to the church and graveyard complex. They spoil the setting somewhat. Could they be moved towards the public toilet areas perhaps? Although somewhat out of the way, the area around the toilets was also litter free.

Tidiness:

Once again the pride your residents take in the village was very evident with a very tidy appearance to most areas of the village. We note your plans to wash and renew the paint on signage and this type of ongoing maintenance is critical to maintain standards. The use of the dark green stain on the picnic benches is very complimentary to the wooded setting of the quay and the brown timber wildlife sign here could be stained with the same green to really create a coherent sense of village identity. Likewise if you are planning to install new timber litter bins, as was mentioned in the submission, consider using the same green stain to again tie all these elements together.

Waste Minimisation:

In addition to your successful composting strategy how have your community practically been addressing this category? Have you considered water butts to collect rainwater from buildings? This can then be used to water trees or plants during dry periods. Other simple ways to advance in this category is to encourage your community's participation in for example earth hour or cycle week, nationally promoted programmes that you could take part in. These can be simple and effective ways to get the message across and will gain you points in this category.

Residential Areas:

Generally the residential areas in the village are maintained to a high standard with some lovely cottage gardens near the village green which really add to the village setting. Well done to all residents in upholding the high standards here. We look forward to your progress with the residents of the old Mill Estate, in getting the landscape plan here completed. In the meantime remove the tree ties from the trees in the estate as they should be removed once the tree has become stable, and if left in place can cause wounds and scarring to the

tree.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Approach to the village were well maintained and we note your adherence to the times, as indicated in the wildlife act, in carrying out hedge cutting. Could the developer at the Old Mill Estate be persuaded to remove the temporary fencing to the roadside boundary of the site or perhaps plant a native hedge here to the roadside verge to improve its appearance? Have you considered fitting bike stands near the car park? This adjudicator arrived in your village by bicycle and would have liked to have had a secure place to park their bike while they strolled around the village. There were two empty poles in the village which should be removed if no longer required for signage. The name stones at the entrance to the village were appropriately sited and maintained and create a lovely feature to welcome a visitor to the village.

General Impression:

St. Mullins is such a lovely village with an interesting mix of old and new buildings set in a stunning landscape setting. The efforts of the committee and the local community are clearly visible to the visitor. We wish you well in addressing issues facing your continued progression. Thank you to all involved in this years submission and good luck for all your works in 2013.