

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Collooney** Ref: **807**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **224**
Category: **C** Date(s): **28/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	35	36
The Built Environment	50	28	30
Landscaping	50	31	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25	25
Litter Control	50	24	24
Tidiness	30	12	13
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Residential Areas	40	25	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	20	21
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	400	216	224

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Collooney, to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. It is noted from your entry form that you have seven members on your committee and it is positive to note that this is an increase on 2011. It is observed that your TidyTowns committee is a joint effort involving the Development Committee and the Allotment Association and it is great to see community groups working together to improve their town. However, no details appear to have been provided about your level of involvement with local sport groups? Are they involved in your projects? Other options that could be considered include social groups such as the active retirement group or a local historical society. Interest groups that have an environmental focus such as residents associations should also be approached. Remember, involving other voluntary organisations can boost your level of support as well as raise local awareness of the TidyTowns effort. It is good to see that you're working with the County Council, Sligo Forum and the Sligo Leader Company. These agencies can be valuable sources of advice, support and financial aid. You should also consider approaching Fas, as they can often provide advice, materials or sometimes labour for your projects. Your communication strategy was read with interest and we are pleased to see that you are making use of the Internet to publicise your projects and events. According to your entry form, contact is made with the local school through your newsletter. Have you considered appointing a liaison officer from your committee to contact the school? We would strongly encourage the TidyTowns group to try to involve the school in their projects as it can raise environmental awareness and participation at the local level. Schools can also make very valuable contributions to categories such as wildlife, litter control and landscaping. As referred to by the adjudicator in 2011, we would encourage you to consider preparing a TidyTowns action plan. This is a very effective way of identifying and scheduling all of your projects and can also earn you additional marks under this category. We note from the letter attached to your entry form that your time has been spent on other issues in the year to date and that your Tidy Towns plan is a priority for 2013. Thank you for the map that was included in your entry form as it was most helpful during adjudication.

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator was most impressed with Collooney as the range of interesting buildings and features in the town was fascinating. The adjudicator loved a number of the buildings such as the Catholic Church (St Pauls) on Chapel Street as it is a very impressive structure in excellent condition – we especially liked the splayed entrance with the natural stone boundary walls running up almost to the front door. The circular green space just in front of the entrance also adds to the setting of this building. The Methodist Church building and its neat and tidy grounds was also impressive. A number of very attractive and well maintained commercial premises were noted along the Main Street. They included McKims Mace and Hardware, Gilmartin's and the Post Office, which were all attractive traditional buildings presented to a high standard. The pharmacy offered a nice contrast with its modern design and shopfront. Other commercial premises that made a positive contribution to the streetscape included Basil Higgins, the barbershop and the takeaway. The adjudicator also liked P. Cullen, the Teeling cafe and Connolly's bar. One of the highlights was perhaps the Church of the Assumption, which is an excellent building that provides a lovely landmark for the town. Its standard of presentation was also high and its railings have been recently painted. The buildings that are clustered around the bridge were very interesting. The adjudicator was most impressed with Quigley's which is a very interesting and original piece of vernacular architecture and it is great to see that the building remains in productive use and in good condition. The building opposite was also admired despite its rather untidy appearance. While the adjudicator acknowledges that the Innisfree Crystal building presents a challenge for the committee and the town due to its rundown appearance, you are strongly urged to persist with trying to get the building restored. It appears to be a highly original piece of architecture and it is part of the identity of Collooney. The adjudicator also admired the unashamedly modern designs of the buildings in the Mill Falls residential area. The mill building was also admired from the Riverwalk and one wonders if there any proposals for this structure? Further out, the railway station buildings and the railway bridge were examined. The adjudicator was most impressed with your new facilities namely the playground which is a lovely amenity (and which was proving popular with residents during adjudication) and new award winning GAA pitch and clubhouse. One hopes that the works to both facilities will continue as the entrance to the car park for the playground is very untidy looking and the parking area needs to be surfaced. Similarly, the parking area for the GAA pitch also needs to be resurfaced. One hopes that these projects can be completed in the near future.

Landscaping:

The committee have clearly been working hard on this category as a number of good examples of landscaping were spotted during adjudication. The adjudicator particularly liked the landscaping beds at the junction in the centre (close to the Church of Ireland - which we think is described as the square in your entry form) and we applaud your decision to go for a mix of perennials and trees. Well done, as this will help provide year-round colour in the centre of your town. Your decision to provide landscaping at the bring back is to be commended as it enhances the appearance of what is otherwise a rather functional area. Landscaping was also admired at the grotto across from the Church of the Assumption of the Roses – as it added lovely summer colour. Attractive landscaping was observed at the original entrance name stone to Kiernan's Avenue and the adjudicator admired the lovely mature trees in the grounds of St Pauls School. It is noted that the landscaping has taken place on the boundaries of the playground and also on the GAA grounds. This planting will mature and its appearance will improve in the years to come. The adjudicator also spotted some planting on the Riverwalk and like the previous years adjudicator, noticed some giant hogweed in a number of different areas along the river, particularly on the grounds of the Innisfree crystal building immediately adjacent to the bridge and also at the end of the Riverwalk beyond the waterfalls. It is noted that you are aware of this issue and that you intend to eliminate the hogweed for 2013.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It is great to see that you have exciting proposals under this category. The adjudicator visited the Riverwalk (accessed through the mill falls) and was amazed at the waterfall and the mill building in particular. This is a lovely walk and it is strongly recommended that it is further developed in the years ahead. According to your entry form, it is your intention to continue to tidy up the natural walkways around Union Wood. Unfortunately, the adjudicator was unable to find these walkways during the visit as there appeared to be no signage and they were not marked on the map supplied. Please ensure that the Union Wood walk is clearly indicated on your map in 2013 to enable us to make a full assessment and to make some suggestions. The 2011 adjudicator refers to the existence of a biodiversity management plan for Collooney in 2010. However, this was not part of your entry documentation. Could this be submitted in 2013? The biodiversity plan could also provide excellent opportunities for joint projects with the school and you are encouraged to identify any wildlife projects that the school could become involved in. Remember also that the species chosen for your landscaping schemes should make a positive contribution to biodiversity.

Litter Control:

According to your entry form, you undertake weekly litter patrols. Well done on achieving a good level of involvement (including with the schools) in the spring clean. It is further noted that the signs were installed at the girls primary school and the litter bins have been provided in the playground. On the day of adjudication, the town was generally clean with most areas litter free and in the view of the adjudicator, this represents an improvement of 2011. However, litter was present in some areas. For example, litter was spotted inside the walls of the graveyard of St Paul's (on the left-hand side facing the front door). It appears that litter is being thrown from the pavement into the graveyard and landing behind the wall. Some litter was also spotted at the clothes bank by the school and in the area in front of the bookies on the Main Street (as referred to in the 2011 adjudicator's report). The area in front of the bookies appears to be a litter black spot and it suggested that this area should receive additional attention during litter patrols. Another area that suffered badly from litter was the road verge leading up to the GAA pitch that is adjacent to the rear of the industrial units. This untidy verge had quite a lot of litter and once again, it should receive attention on your litter patrols.

Tidiness:

In the view of the adjudicator the standard of tidiness achieved in Collooney in 2012 is impressive. The efforts of the committee in the area of weed control is considered to be very effective as very little weed was visible and the majority of road verges and footpaths when neat and cleanly swept. The bottle bank was a very good shape on the day of adjudication and apart from one box of bottles that had been left beside one of the bins, it was very clean and it looked well especially with its colourful landscaping. It is also good to see that some of the suggestions made by the adjudicator in 2011 have been followed up. For example, the gate adjacent to the AIB bank appears to have been painted and it looked well during adjudication. Other improvements are possible however. The gates of the cemetery of St Paul's are likely to need paint for 2013 while the fencing with its concrete poles and wire mesh above the walls of the school (directly opposite St Paul's Church) are quite untidy looking. The landscaping beds around the perimeter of the parking area at the bring bank would benefit from some weeding as they appeared untidy looking. The seat in the seating area at Kiernans Avenue will need paint in time for 2013, while the landscaping area adjacent to the seat was very untidy looking. The signage in a number of locations in the town (for example the brown directional signage at the junction in the centre) appeared quite dirty and untidy looking and the car park of the Church of the assumption was a little untidy and weedy - this detracted somewhat from what is otherwise an excellent building.

Waste Minimisation:

The focus of this category is to encourage waste minimisation by raising awareness, undertaking initiatives, highlighting facilities and activities for minimising and recycling waste as well as working with schools, local businesses and residents in promoting best practice. While it is noted from your entry form that your group segregate litter collected during cleanups and that efforts are made to achieve a high standard of presentation at the bottle bank and recycling clothes bin, you are encouraged to identify ways of minimising waste in your own projects as well as raising awareness of this issue at the local level. Possible actions include making your own compost for use in your landscaping projects and growing your own plants, either in a communal area or in committee members gardens. You can also restrict the use of hanging baskets and planting boxes and tubs as they require more water than permanent beds. Actions to raise awareness of the local level could involve organising a composting workshop with the environmental awareness officer of Sligo County Council. Other ideas for actions under this category can be found in the TidyTowns handbook.

Residential Areas:

A number of residential areas were inspected during the visit and the adjudicator particularly liked the established residential area at Kiernan Avenue with its attractive green space adjacent to the entrance. In Rowan Tree Gardens, individual houses and gardens looked well and the green area was quite well maintained but one feels that the area would benefit from some additional landscaping. The modern development at Highwood Park is quite nice with an attractive central green space. However, what appears to be the pumping station (which is located on part of the green space) is untidy looking and draws the attention of the observer. Perhaps this could be screened by hedging? Further up, Riverwalk is quite nice with well presented individual houses and gardens and nicely maintained green areas with landscaping, semimature trees and bilingual signage. Raharc na gCaislean looked quite well with its newly planted hedge opposite, although some weeds were noted at the kerbs along the entrance road – this was also reported to be the case by the adjudicator in 2011. The adjudicator quite liked Cois Abhainn, with its riverside location and its walkways from the communal car park. However, it appeared untidy due to weeds and poorly maintained flower beds surrounding the car park. The Mill Falls caught the attention of the adjudicator due to its modern design and materials. However, the scheme was let down somewhat by the presence of a number of weedy and overgrown landscape beds. Castle Cove opposite the playground is quite nice mature residential area but it could be improved by maintaining the attractive landscape bed on the corner of the central green space. The modern estate of Steeple Heights is a very nice residential area, but the appearance of the landscaping beds is mixed with some appearing in better condition than others.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

According to your entry form, your projects for 2012 under this category included cleaning the bridges and picking litter from within a 1 km radius of the town. Well done as both of these projects have helped to improve the approach roads to the town. In general however, further improvements are possible as the approach from Coolaney is not of a high standard due to untidy and dirty signage, no town name sign visible, broken and very overgrown natural stone boundary walls and a very untidy footpath at the 50 kmph sign. The approach to Barrack Street (from the Sligo Road roundabout) past the small park and the mature trees, achieves a higher standard while the Knockbeg approach is reasonable. Perhaps some landscaping projects could be considered for the approach roads?

General Impression:

The adjudicator was most impressed with the town of Collooney and the efforts of their tidy towns group to date. It is understood that your group has only recently began its work and you are to be congratulated on your notable successes so far. Your hard work is also evident in the appearance of the town which has improved significantly in the last two years. Well done and keep up the good work!