

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Keash** Ref: **1220**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **238**
Category: **A** Date(s): **29/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	28	30
The Built Environment	50	32	33
Landscaping	50	33	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	14	17
Litter Control	50	32	32
Tidiness	30	17	17
Waste Minimisation	20	11	12
Residential Areas	40	23	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	31
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	228	238

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator is delighted to welcome Keash to the 2012 TidyTowns competition. Well done to your five committed and dedicated members as your performance indicates a much higher level of participation at community level. No doubt that this is due in part to the good links that you've established with Fas and the Community Employment Scheme. It is also great to see that you enjoy a good relationship with Sligo County Council who has provided grant aid for some of your landscaping projects. Like the adjudicator in 2011, you are once again encouraged to seek funding from additional sources such as the local leader or partnership company, as these agencies are normally happy to support community groups. Perhaps the TidyTowns could also make contact with other local sports clubs in Keash (such as the GAA) with a view to boosting participation? Local social clubs and residents associations can provide useful sources of support for your ongoing projects. It is heartening to see that you established good links with the school and we would be very interested in hearing about how you communicate with the schoolchildren. Are some of the teachers or the principal on your committee? You are congratulated on your close work with the school on the creation of a wildlife area in their garden. Remember, joint projects are very effective means of both raising environmental awareness and boosting participation in the TidyTowns effort and we would encourage you to try and identify other joint projects with the school – perhaps in the categories of landscaping and waste minimisation. Thank you for your 3 year TidyTowns action plan. This was helpful as it demonstrated that the TidyTowns group are planning for the future and identifying projects that need to be completed. However, it is strongly recommended that your plan should follow the TidyTowns categories as set out in the entry form. This will enable you to identify projects under each category and provide you with the best chance of improving across a range of categories each year. Thank you also for your map which was attached to your entry form.

The Built Environment:

The built environment of Keash is very interesting because of the mix of buildings and features from the past to the present day. The adjudicator was fascinated by the number of historical features such as the Toomour Abbey (located on the Boyle Road), the Kings stone well, and St. Kevins Church. Some caves were also visible on the Hill side from the approach road to Graniamore, but did not seem to be referred to anywhere. Are these caves of local significance? Have the TidyTowns group considered providing a heritage and nature trail which takes in these historical features of the village as well as its areas of wildlife interest? It struck the adjudicator that the access to each of these features is a little difficult to negotiate by car and it will be great if it was possible to walk to each one using a Heritage and Nature Trail. A trail could also include information signage that indicates the significance of each of the features. The cluster of community buildings in the village centre was also admired. St Kevins Church, with its attractively landscaped grounds, looked very well on the day of adjudication and the White hall also achieved a very high standard of presentation. The National School building represents another interesting building in the village. The Foxes Den at the entrance to the village also drew the attention of the adjudicator with the unusual gate piers to the rear of the car park. They appear to be large cast-iron structures that are painted green. Is there any significance to these gate piers? Aside from these buildings, the majority of the remaining structures in the village appear to be modern buildings and dwellings, the vast majority of which looked very well on adjudication day. It is noted from your entry form that your key project under this category for 2012 was the works to the historic Kings stone well. These works included improving access, erecting gates and fencing as well as providing an information plaque. It is recommended that some directional signage for the Well is considered (possibly from Droim Caoin) as it was not particularly easy to find during adjudication. We are also in agreement with the suggestion of the adjudicator in 2011 regarding actions to distinguish the village from the surrounding countryside which should be undertaken. Painting the field gates in the village in a local colour is considered to be a good idea as it would clearly delineate the village.

Landscaping:

A number of your landscaping projects were admired on adjudication day. The stone planting beds containing roses beneath the 60 kmph sign are quite nice and colourful, while the planters at the bus stop are quite attractive and help to brighten up this roadside area. The pump is also quite an attractive feature and it seems have been recently painted and attractive and colourful landscaping was provided at its base. However, the steel surround enclosing the gravel bed appeared detached on one side during the adjudication. The planters at the entrance to the village also add colour and help to create a positive first impression of the visitor. We noted that the failed shrubs in Droim Caoin were replaced with varieties that would attract wildlife. It is further noted that four new stone planters were built and planted with flowers and well done on favouring the use of perennials in 2012. It was also observed that some exotic plant species could be found in a number of the planters in the village and it is strongly recommended that native perennials are used for planters as the exotic species are often not suited to Ireland and they make a poor contribution to our wildlife.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Well done on your work at the school in the creation of a new wildlife area as this is exactly the kind of project that the TidyTowns competition is trying to encourage. This wildflower area (which appears to be directly across the road from the school) was observed along with the sign indicating the wildflowers that are native to Keash. The second sign indicating Irish trees, Irish flowers, Irish birds and Irish animals was also read with interest. The access arrangements to the area appear to be a little unusual though. As soon as one enters the wildlife area, one encounters a very steep bank. Is there a proposal to create a walkway here? Congratulations also on the creation of an interpretive poster in order to raise community awareness on the wildlife that can be found in Keash. It is great to see that you followed the advice of the 2011 adjudicator in this regard. Did the information for this interpretive poster come from a wildlife study and management plan? If so, please be sure to submit this information for the 2013 competition.

Litter Control:

The organisation of a monthly cleanup is an excellent way of keeping your village litter free. It is also great to see that you get such great participation from both young and old in this initiative. Involving the schoolchildren in getting the 'no litter' message across is also to be commended. Unfortunately, the village was not litter free with some litter spotted in the verge outside the school and at the car park at the bottle bank.

Tidiness:

According to your entry form, the emphasis in 2012 was on weed control during the monthly cleanup, painting signposts and replacing weather beaten signs and cutting the grass along the main road. The standard of tidiness was generally good and it is apparent that the Committee have been working hard in this regard.

Nonetheless, improvements are still possible. While the parking area of the Foxes Den was clean and tidy with no litter and weeds, the surface dressing of the car park remained in quite poor condition. It is noted that this was also referred in the 2011 adjudicators report. Likewise, the boundary wall and the verge opposite the GAA pitch was in poor condition and looked quite untidy. One hopes that the development proposed under their recent planning application will also provide for some improvements in the appearance of the grounds. The signage is generally in reasonable condition but in some cases the directional signage (such as the directional sign to Culfadda) will need to be replaced as it is becoming faded and difficult to read. The "children about" road traffic sign is in relatively poor condition on the verge just in front of the Foxes Den bar and it also requires attention. The verge directly opposite the school (on the opposite side of the road) was also a little untidy looking due to its rough and ready surfacing and a small heap of spoil in the corner. This appears to be the school set down area and we are in no doubt that it performs an important function but its appearance is not of the highest standard.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on segregating all the litter collected during your cleanups. It is noted that you have worked with Sligo County Council on their anti litter campaign and one wonders if it has made a difference at the local level? According to your entry form, other projects are planned such as promoting compost bins and continuing to work with the school and their waste minimisation projects – it is noted from your submission that the School has a number of waste minimisation actions ongoing. It is suggested that your initiative to recycle plants from residents gardens in your landscaping schemes is also a suitable waste minimisation project. Like the adjudicator in 2011, we recommend that the committee should consider conducting a waste audit. This would enable you to identify what waste is being generated and how it is being disposed of. Remember, the focus of this category is to minimise waste and therefore to try and prevent it from being produced in the first place. A second priority is to try and recycle waste once it has been produced. As the waste audit can help you identify what waste is being generated, it will allow you to come up with projects that can either reduce waste from being regenerated or avoid it entirely. Other ideas for actions under this category can be found in the Tidy Towns handbook.

Residential Areas:

According to your entry form, your projects under this category include maintaining, cutting, weeding and feeding the grass at Keash new homes. The other projects listed under this category are perhaps best considered under the categories of landscaping, tidiness and litter. The Keash new homes residential area was observed during adjudication and the individual houses and the green space at the boundary looked well. The planters positioned on the green space also added colour. In general, it was considered that the individual dwellings and their gardens in Keash achieved a high standard of presentation. Well done to all concerned.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

According to your entry form, the projects for 2012 under this category included; maintenance of grass verges (by cutting and weeding), the restoration of the bridge and the provision of four new natural stone planters on the approach roads. The hard work of the committee was plain to see on adjudication day as all of the approach roads to Keash were generally good. On the approach from Boyle, the traditional black-and-white name sign for Keash was noted with a small raised natural stone landscaping bed beneath it. The 'wishing well' Welcome to Keash sign was also quite an attractive little feature, particularly with its colourful summer flowering plants. However, we would agree with the previous years adjudicator that excessive signage on these structures should be avoided. The quality of the road surfaces in Keash was also generally good, despite some potholes noted at the junction with the Culfadda Road. The approach from Ballymote was also attractive with tidy verges, visible signage and attractive landscaping. However, it was noted that Keash sign (in the wishing well) was unusually positioned relative to the black-and-white Keash sign. Is there a reason for leaving a large gap between the signs?

General Impression:

Keash is a very attractive little village and it is great to see that it continues to improve each year. Well done on a strong performance in 2012 and will look forward to your entry in 2013. Keep up the good work !