

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rathcormac** Ref: **2085**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **235**
Category: **A** Date(s): **13/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	34	35
The Built Environment	50	29	30
Landscaping	50	35	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	13	19
Litter Control	50	33	34
Tidiness	30	13	14
Waste Minimisation	20	7	8
Residential Areas	40	27	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25	25
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	223	235

Overall Development Approach:

Rathcormac is welcome back for its second year ever to the TidyTowns Competition. The inclusion this year of your draft strategic plan is important as this helps to measure your success work to date. Was there a wide consultation process for this? You have great community support and seem to manage meetings and fundraising events very well.

Whilst you work very well with the local school and scout group, perhaps you could consider in the longer term a youth representative on your committee or someone from the local Foroige to help involve the teenagers from the community?

The coffee morning fundraising event was a good idea.

You also work with a good range of local bodies, agencies and the County Council. Your committee should be highly commended for their ability to work so well with the various bodies and gaining their support for events and activities.

Congratulations to your Press Officer who has worked hard to ensure all are aware in newsletter, newspapers, text alerts, posters etc. Of particular note was your collaborative efforts with neighbouring TidyTowns Communities. It was good to read that so many from across the Rathcormac community have engaged in this programme.

The Built Environment:

Despite the main road, you have a lovely central park and sculpture in your village. The Desk and Field survey of the Built Heritage of your Community is to be commended and its future availability on-line will be of

good value. You have carried out a large number of re-painting projects throughout Rathcormac which are to be highly commended. The repaired water pumps looked good and it was good to note that the moss on the surrounding walls was not cleaned off.

The wrought iron farm gate painted red was noted – it is good to see such local heritage stand out so well. Yeats Bar looked well and the recent work on revamping the garage was noted also. Both the school and the church presented nicely though no green flag was flying at the time of the visit. Flags also looked bright at NW Grass beside the new native hedge planting, and the Tyre premises looked very tidy. The welcome sign at the graveyard was worded very nicely – what great views there are here. Have you considered painting the galvanised gates here? If the surface is prepared properly, this can look very good.

The Old School House was admired with its new beds, and the new wall was noted.

Landscaping:

Your adjudicator was delighted to learn of the wide use across the community of peat free compost. This will also gain you marks in both the wildlife and the waste minimization categories.

There are some lovely trees planted in the community park and the sale of saplings in your homemade compost is a great fundraising idea. It is lovely that the local community are so involved with planting of bulbs and shrubs in the park, that they have grown.

Despite having the main N15 running through the centre of your community, your roadside landscaping efforts really help to achieve a sense of place and will naturally get the motorist to slow down. The planters looked well by the bus stops.

The trees and ivy growing on the roadside out buildings at Branley's Yard work well in shielding the corrugated roof and concrete wall here. A whole team of workers were tidying the church surrounds.

The trees planted behind the wall at Old School House Lane were admired, as was the community garden which was full of busy volunteers tending their plants.

Your hand pulling of weeds is commended. Do watch for the over-zealous use of weedkiller as swaths of dying plants were noted in places. Such indiscriminate use of weedkiller can impact on local water courses. Some plants were growing through and by the new fencing of the council yard – this should be applauded and continued further along. It is believed that there may be some plants of note in this area - discussions on their protection should be advanced.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Congratulations on your work in this category of the competition. You have also collated a wildlife audit of the area and have asked the community to add wildlife information. It is a good initial start. There is little information on how this will be used apart from the continued input of wildlife sightings. It would be great to arrange public events and activities to share this information e.g. Heritage Week events, local talks.

You have adopted a section of the local internationally important wildlife habitat – Doonieran – another excellent initiative.

Your endeavours to promote peat-free are to be highly commended and the fact that the school has adopted this policy also is great. The planting of native species such as ivy at the gate piers, will provide food and shelter.

The new hedging was noted and this will be of great benefit to local wildlife here. There were also some beautiful wild roses in the hedges at Clooneen line.

It was noted that the grass clippings from the church were being dumped beside the footpath to the graveyard. It would be ideal to compost these and use them in your planters.

As detailed in your report, the clump of the invasive plant Japanese knotweed was noted by the footpath to the graveyard from the church. No doubt you have already reported this to your County Council's Heritage Officer. This clump did not appear to have been treated yet with a systemic weedkiller – further details can be found at www.invasivespeciesireland.com. The longer this is left the more virulent it will become growing and destroying the tarmac. The over-growth and nettles along this footpath deter the use of this nice path – and outstanding issues on the future of this area should be quickly settled before the Japanese knotweed spreads.

Also commend the bug hotel completed at Rathcormac's school!

Litter Control:

Congratulations to the large numbers that have been involved with the community litter picks. Pickers were out at the time of your adjudicator's visit and little litter was noted. It is beneficial that you are able to note and measure the impact of your awareness raising activities and although you have expanded your collection area, there is less litter overall per km of road surveyed.

Tidiness:

It was good to read of your proactive approach to the problem of fly posting, illegal signage and advertising through the village. This is an example of great work of a standard of many veteran TidyTown groups. As a result the village looked quite tidy in most areas.

The central reservation yellow warning bollards are falling down and are in a state of disrepair.

There is a nice traditional sign at Branley's yard with details of all the businesses hosted here. Could the other signs surrounding here be amalgamated onto this original sign? Currently with the various signs dotted around here makes it look very busy with the effect that it is difficult to read any. It is suggested that the half wooden barrel with weeds and the red swing sign are also removed from this area. Overall, a bit of thought on the look of this entrance could work to entice the passerby. Once in there it is an ideal area for children to explore under the trees – maybe this could be developed more? The old doors should be removed from here.

There was a redundant concrete base with wire attached near Mace.

Waste Minimisation:

You have carried out many good examples of relevant activities for this section such as the water saving devices in the school and the rain-water harvester. Mulching of grass cuttings is another good project. Your adjudicator read that the Council's Waste Enforcement Officer is due to speak to the group - perhaps you could open this to make it a public event if possible to help raise awareness of this important category of the competition?

Residential Areas:

There is an obvious pride by residents of Rathcormac and most homes were presented very nicely. There was no name at the entrance to the estate where homes looked very good but the road needs urgent attention, though road side bags implied that this was work in progress. Some of the boundary walls of this estate need to be finished.

Driving along the Drum Road, most homes look very well - once the newer premises complete their landscaping, this will be a very attractive road.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Arriving from Bundoran, the entrance sign looked clean with nice flowers beneath, though the Sligo logo on the name sign has completely faded.

The junction by the council yard has recently had some hard core added and this looked unfinished. In some places the concrete kerb stones were breaking.

Your adjudicator has given much thought to the hard shoulder/layby area in front of the garage and public house. With the passing traffic it is necessary to allow safe access to these areas. As it stands there is a lack of definition between the road, hard shoulder and parking area giving a neglected feel to this area and there is no apparent safe pedestrian route from the church and school to the bus stops. Some discussions with the road engineer may help enhance this area and attract the passerby to stop safely also?

There are a large number of brown signs at what is considered by your adjudicator as quite a dangerous road junction – the Kintogher Road. It is difficult to read all of these here.

General Impression:

It was good to read how this competition has helped to strengthen your rural community. It has been some time since your adjudicator has visited Rathcormac and it has notably improved so your efforts over the past 18 months should be highly commended. As it is only your second year in the competition, you have come on in leaps and bounds. Congratulations to a dedicated and enthusiastic committee.

