

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Croghan** Ref: **308**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **260**
Category: **A** Date(s): **27/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	34	35
The Built Environment	50	34	36
Landscaping	50	35	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20	21
Litter Control	50	38	38
Tidiness	30	20	21
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Residential Areas	40	22	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	31
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	251	260

Overall Development Approach:

Croghan is very welcome to the 2012 Supervalu National TidyTowns competition. Having 11 members is a very good achievement for a small village. We note that you have held seven meetings so far this year. You do not actually say when your year begins. Does this mean that you have had seven meetings since your last entry (2011) or since the beginning of January? Perhaps you would elaborate next year. We feel that it must mean since January - as we think that to do all you do - even in a small village would involve more meetings since September!

We are delighted that you have sponsorship from local businesses. Do you get any other support from agencies and bodies who might be able to help you? If you look in the TidyTowns Handbook, you will find some suggestions of such help and advice available. We assume that Roscommon County Council do give you some help.

We notice that you communicate through the local paper and the community newsletter. Have you considered setting up a website or Facebook page so that you might liaise with the younger generation?

Well done on your talk in your local school. We appreciate your comments in relation to the small population of Croghan. However, there are many other villages like yourselves – and even smaller - throughout the country who enter and do very well in the competition. Don't forget that your category is for villages with a population of less than 200 – so that it is small in itself. Well done on your Easter Parade which was a fundraiser for the TidyTowns locally, and we wish you luck with your 10 K walk in August for further fundraising purposes.

We note that you are waiting for a proposal to Croghan TidyTowns committee for the preparation of a three-year TidyTowns Plan. You are hoping to obtain LEADER funding for this plan. However, it is a pity that

you did not submit even a short plan that you might have prepared yourselves for this year's adjudication. No matter how simple a plan is - it is important to submit such with your application. Your map - although quite simple - was helpful to the adjudicator. Your three-year plan will contain maps relevant to the proposals included.

The Built Environment:

One of the black and white village pumps with its lovely yellow bed of flowers underneath, enclosed by a recessed stone wall enclosure looked really well, apart from the rustic log edging to the raised bed. This edging was somewhat out of character with the natural stonework. We feel that a stone edge to this raised bed would look far better. The second village pump was presented in a simpler fashion in a very small semicircular recess, with a simple scenario, triangular stone fronted bed in front of it. Both, however are a credit to you!

The immediate approach to the street in Croghan, as approached downhill from the Boyle side has lovely stonewalling on each side with a view of beautifully maintained properties in the foreground - including gables and farm buildings of properties stretching back from the road.

The Community Centre is a charming building with its lovely stone work and brick surrounds to the doors and windows. We liked the planters along the wall edge and window boxes as they were restrained and natural looking. This is a wonderful amenity for the village to have. On the other side of the street there are some very fine properties which were all presented in an excellent fashion, and the streetscape line has been retained and its lovely vernacular character has been kept intact.

One of the items which we liked best in our travels this year was the wonderful sign beside the Community Centre called "Landscapes of Croghan". This sign included truly excellent line drawings of - not alone your natural amenities - but most particularly of your built heritage. The Croghan Gates, view of the church, the sketch of the community centre - all drawn by a lady called Jeanette Dunne, together with all the other interesting sketches in the entire display are a remarkable insight into your appreciation of all aspects of your heritage - be it man made or natural.

The Croghan Bar is a nice traditional building, and is not over-decorated with signage or external lighting. It is a classically simple and delightful village structure. The white single story house adjacent to the Croghan Bar was glistening with new paint, and was very attractive with its lovely trellis planting. We noticed the bunting on the buildings in this area, which (the bunting) was in very good condition, and we wondered what you were celebrating. We later spotted the sign wishing good luck to the Shannon Gaels Girls/Féile 2012 - so we assume this is the reason for the bunting. We hope that the good luck wishes are now congratulatory! We also hope that this - what is in effect - fly posting has been removed by now! The Forge is a beautiful stone building with delightful red painted windows and door. The "planted" bicycles outside the forge door were an interesting feature.

The church is a very well maintained building in lovely landscaped grounds. But what interested this adjudicator was the fact that the main church door exited onto the main village street. The church is not set back from the street - as most village churches are. So you have a very unusual feature here - which is more common in urban areas and therefore you have something interesting which most of your neighbouring villages do not have. There is an intimacy of being able to step from the street directly into the church that is not as possible where the church is set back. The fact that it retains the street line is also admirable architecturally.

Distant views to the elegant spire of the Church of Ireland add to the enjoyment of the village street. It is nice that you have left traditional elements of the built environment in the stone wall network - stiles for instance. The Church of Ireland is a beautiful building in leafy surrounds. We noticed a jostle stone in the area of the Ashford estates/Church of Ireland. The green gate in this area was also admired.

Well done on the painting which you have being undertaking of derelict buildings.

Landscaping:

We are delighted that you have planted more trees and whitethorn hedging on the way to the new school.

We admired the green area beside the Community Centre with its wonderfully kept grassed areas and lovely mature trees of different species. This is certainly a nice environment in which to place your bird feeders and your bog oak seat. The raised bed on the corner of the Park beside the Community Centre and the road to the football field was elegant with its lovely red and yellow flowers. The low hedging above the lovely stone church boundary was an equal match for the elegance of this entire corner. The four uniform Celtic Cross grave markers inside the church boundary added to this corner scene. We notice that the planting was in

memory of a young member of your community. It is certainly a most fitting tribute.

The "national" piece of heritage machinery looked very well in its setting. However we would not ourselves put plastic flower containers in this natural recess space, which has a lovely aspect with its stone walls and stonewall planting.

The restoration of The Pound is a lovely development, and is very commemorative of your local heritage. The limestone plaque is executed in a very tasteful fashion, and we were very interested in its content, a photograph of which we took (amongst many others!) to peruse again at our leisure. It must be very interesting for your local inhabitants to see people they remembered - or indeed were related to - commemorated in such a tasteful fashion. The Pound was presented in a perfect condition on adjudication day with its beautiful stonework and landscaped grass, together with its stream and raised planting beds. It is an oasis of quiet and local interest.

The new school could benefit from additional planting.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Croghan village is set in beautiful rural surroundings which are full of wildlife and natural amenities. The bird feeders beside the community centre will certainly tempt much of the bird life into the village especially if the weather becomes cold. It is good to give the children the responsibility of keeping the feeders filled with suitable food. Birdwatch Ireland's website is a very good source of advice in this area. We noticed all the bird boxes in the pound area also. It must be lovely to watch the wild duck and her ducklings in the little stream.

You intend with your consultants' approval to develop the green area across from the football pitch which will have a landscaping amenity and wildlife function.

We admired the TidyTown's "Flora and Fauna of Croghan Area" sign with its delightful stone raised bed of colourful flowers - which had been planted carefully so as not to obstruct any of the content of the sign. In future it would be great if you could include the Irish names of the animals, trees, plants, and birds on such informative boards. The three flags flying above this sign each had flags attached, although in the damp conditions of the adjudication day they were not looking their best - through no fault of yours or the flags! We would also suggest that the standards holding the hanging baskets at this point are another unnecessary addition to what is a lovely stone wall recess space with delightful wooden gates on each side, and a lovely backdrop of trees. The standards are inclined to distract the eye and overcomplicate the picture where you are describing the natural environment.

We are glad to see that you are planting trees and hedges to attract wildlife. Please also refer to the TidyTown's Handbook for excellent advice in this area, as it will guide you in the selection of the correct native species to plant. Perhaps you might engage with the County Heritage Officer in exploring ways in which to further your knowledge and interpretation in this category? Surveys and management plans in this category will also attract more marks! Roscommon County Council, in association with The Heritage Council has published wonderfully informative material about the biodiversity of the County.

We saw evidence of chemical weeding on the Elphin approach road area and we would suggest that you discuss alternative organic methods of weed control with the County Heritage Officer.

Litter Control:

The village was litter free. We see that you are communicating with the children about the importance of not creating litter and about the importance of dealing with litter created by less careful people. Good luck with all your clean up days. We are delighted that you are planning daily litter patrols, because in this way, you will ensure a high standard of litter management. The school is a great place to begin with educating the local community with regard to litter and you are doing this.

It is important also that you consider a Litter Control Plan. This should form part of your plan. This need not be a complicated plan, but should involve working jointly with your local authority's Environment Section. You should consult "The Roscommon Litter Management Plan 2011- 2014". This will give you lots of ideas and suggest ways where you can dovetail your projects with the Plan. Such forward planning will give you an additional advantage in this area and increase your marks in this category.

Tidiness:

It is good that the three old poles you refer to have been removed. Sometimes a "before" and "after" photograph is useful to show the difference to the adjudicator.

We saw one lamp standard with brackets for hanging baskets which did not have any baskets attached. As

we feel that your village is so beautifully rural in its character we are not encouraging you to add any more hanging baskets, as we believe they are not necessary and take from your ambience. So therefore in this situation we would suggest that you remove the bracket completely.

The Connacht Gold recessed site area is tidy, but the building itself would benefit from a fresh coat of paint. The security gates and security railings at one end of the recessed space are quite an intrusive element on this lovely village road. At least they could be painted perhaps and some screening provided behind them. The attachment of so much signage to the railings and gate and adjacent fencing detracts from the beauty of this road. The main sign on two raw metal poles for Connacht Gold badly needs replacement/ renewal.

A sign for Ashfort showhouse on the lovely corner at the landscaped raised bed opposite the church should be removed. Some on- street car parking was partially on footpaths on adjudication day. This both looks untidy and causes damage to the footpaths. Try to discourage your residents and visitors from this.

We already referred to the delightfully presented house at the junction of the Elphin Road. However as one travels along the minor road from the village - instead of taking the Elphin Road - a small low red corrugated roofed building could be improved upon by painting, and by dealing with the abandoned truck behind the cottage. This is evident on approaching the village from this minor road, despite the greenery in existence. We noticed one pole without any purpose on the Elphin junction side of the church in the village, located beside a very tattered looking wooden gate. This general area needs a little upgrade.

Their new footpath into the village on the school's side was very weedy in places. At the school there was one empty flagpole. The other flagpole was flying the Green Flag. There were some untidy walls and ages in the vicinity of this area. Croghan Fairy Bush premises has too many signs which make it look untidy. Otherwise it was well presented.

The picture of the owls on a gate near a green shed with yellow and red farm machinery looked dirty.

Shannon Gaels GAA pitch and general area were very well presented with stone walls, mature trees and clean gate. Well done to all concerned! The security gate opposite the Church of Ireland in the stone wall looks particularly poorly - given its setting in such proximity to a lovely building. The Church of Ireland notice board itself needs renewal.

Waste Minimisation:

We are glad that you recycle in Croghan. The Environment section of your local authority, Roscommon County Council could certainly help you to move forward in relation to this category. You might even consider conducting an audit of the waste produced in the village with a view to considering how it can be reduced.

We are very pleased that you are going to have a talk for the community on how to prevent waste which will be delivered by the Local County Council. What Bring Bank facilities do you use and is there a chance of getting your own? Waste minimisation involves the prevention of waste accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it. You could increase your marks considerably in this section. As a local community you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a “Bring and Take Day”. This would involve using a local hall / community centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste) and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Refer also to the TidyTowns Handbook, and encourage your school to get involved through - for example - the Green Flag programme.

Residential Areas:

The vast majority of residential properties in Croghan are exemplary in their presentation. Well done on tidying suggested in last year's report. A house beyond the school had new sash Windows and nice gates stop.

We would particularly commend the beautifully maintained house at the junction of the Elphin Road. It is quite difficult to present this house in such a nice fashion, as its front, rear, and side elevations are all open in views to three roads. The lovely planting and trellis planting on its gable and around its front elevation is very commendable.

The projects you mention under this heading are not applicable to residential areas. Well done in any event in the new timber fence on the way to the school and on the new stone piers across from the old school. The fact that you are going to plant more trees in the village and develop a park across from the GAA pitch for local people and wildlife, again is more applicable to other categories of this application process than to the residential. If you refer to the TidyTowns Handbook, it will become clearer as to the projects which are to be

considered under this category heading. The estate beside the Fairy Bush was unfinished and deteriorating. Have you any plans in relation to this? The road surface was unfinished. Ashford Estate would benefit from the removal of the large auctioneering sign at its entrance. Some kerbing was weedy and we noticed a number of unoccupied houses. Once again here there is a lovely view of the Church of Ireland's spire. The Cois Na hAbhainn sign was admired.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Before one reaches the village of Croghan - as defined by the speed limit signs/village signs - one takes a turn from the Boyle/ Carrick-on-Shannon road at a pretty crossroads. One is shortly thereafter greeted by a lovely stretch of well maintained stonewalling with a neat grass verge, a very well maintained and pretty Céad Míle Fáilte sign which is well painted and has a nice low stone floral circular bed. Sometimes the roofing of such signs looks somewhat "twee" - like a wishing well. However, it is understandable that a desire to roof the sign exists, as the roofing protects from rain and damp ingress into the sign. The road surface in this area - along the grass verge - appears to be suffering from some water retention - although we visited after a downpour, so this may not be normal. The wonderful mature trees on the right-hand side of this approach - together with the matching stone wall are a wonderful introduction to your village. We also noted a beautifully maintained and painted green farm gate - locally made - sited between two stone pillars. Further on towards the village there is the more traditional blue and white metal Croghan village sign, which is equally well presented. However, we feel that there is no necessity to erect more than one village sign. A proliferation of signage can begin to look untidy, and competitive with each sign vying with each other.

The yield sign beside the church corner on the football field road is bent on two corners, and the sign for Elphin is dirty. The hanging basket and Roscommon Flag do not disguise this! The Elphin Road approach is another example of excellent detail to the importance of one's first impression of the village. The grass verges were neatly trimmed, and semi mature trees were planted and staked along the approach. The new school is located on this road. We hope that in due course, the prefabricated section of the building can be replaced with a permanent structure. We admired some nice new semi-mature tree planting inside a stone wall, adjacent to the school. We would respectfully suggest that you might remove the rustic edges to the floral insertions in the stone wall on the left-hand side as one approaches the village from the Elphin side. Once again they detract from the stone work. The tidiness of the footpaths and road signs generally are a credit to your weekly attention to this aspect of the village. Well done on the new road surface beside the GAA pitch and on the new footpath on the way to the new school. We wish you luck with future footpath projects. Ivy was encroaching on a crossroads sign on the Roscommon / Boyle road approach area.

General Impression:

This was this adjudicator's first visit to Croghan. It was a very pleasant visit as the adjudicator found a lovely village waiting to be explored. You have maintained the character of the rural Irish village very well. You obviously have a good community behind you, and this will stand to you also in the future. We wish you well in all that you do and we consider that you have the potential to do well in this competition in the future. Go n-eirí libh!