

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Coolaney** Ref: **680**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **290**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2012**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	41	42
The Built Environment	50	34	35
Landscaping	50	39	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29	31
Litter Control	50	39	39
Tidiness	30	19	20
Waste Minimisation	20	11	12
Residential Areas	40	27	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34	35
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	281	290

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Coolaney to the 2012 TidyTowns competition and congratulations on your achievement last year on winning the County Sligo award for the tidiest town. The levels of participation in Coolaney are amazing with 10 active committee members and a group of approximately 40 volunteers. This reflects a community spirit that is second to none and a determination amongst the residents of the village to improve its appearance. Given the high level of community involvement, we are in no doubt that the TidyTowns group has good links with other community groups such as the Coolaney Development Company and the Coolaney Community Playgroup within the village and that they all get involved in ongoing tidy towns projects. Well done on your links with the statutory agencies and bodies as the list you have provided of supporting organisations is extensive and includes Sligo County Council, the Community Employment Scheme, the Fisheries Board and the National Parks and Wildlife Service. The adjudicator is also very impressed at your level of organisation. The appointment of a dedicated school liaison officer on your committee is an excellent idea and we are delighted to see the junior tidy towns committee has been established at the National School. This is an excellent means of raising awareness and of fostering a sense of ownership by the schoolchildren of the projects of the TidyTowns. Thank you for your comprehensive entry form and the documents that accompanied it. The various newsletters, photos, flyers and formal letters were read with interest and they illustrate the level of hard work that is involved in a successful TidyTowns committee. Thank you also for your five-year plan and it is noted that 2012 is the first year of your new plan. We are delighted to read from your entry form that you have undertaken a consultation exercise in the preparation of this plan and it is great to see that the plan is representative of the wishes of the wider community. It is noted from the adjudicator's report in 2011 that the possibility of including Rockfield in your TidyTowns has been followed up and it is understood from this year's application that both settlements are included. Thank you for the hand drawn map in your entry form as it was most helpful during adjudication. However, now that Rockfield is included, it is strongly recommended that a printed map be used in 2013 to ensure that the same amount of detail is provided for both settlements.

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator enjoyed his first visit to Coolaney and neighbouring Rockfield. The village itself is very attractive, with lovely intact terraces of original dwellings, all of which appear to be in very good condition as which achieve a high standard of presentation. They are uniform in height and finish with their render and roof tiles. The lamp stands are also quite attractive and complement the traditional design of the original terraces of buildings in the village centre and it was observed that the wires appear to have been put underground. The natural stone walls throughout the village are most attractive and add lovely character to it. The adjudicator particularly liked the two historic dwellings on the village side of the bridge which are in very good condition and give a lovely first impression to the visitor. The standard of presentation of commercial premises is high and some of the premises that drew the attention of the adjudicator included O'Gradys and PK meats. The Community Park is most impressive. It is a lovely facility with its playground, playing pitches and changing rooms and one hopes that the car parking area can be surfaced soon. The monument at the top of the village, the circular landscape bed, and the grassed area are lovely and they provide a nice focus for the village centre. The new development, which is an attractive scheme of modern design that is finished to a high standard, was also observed and in the view of the adjudicator, it was a bold decision to allow this modern development with extra height and contrasting design in such a prominent location. However, the building seems to work as it provides a contrast to the more traditional building designs that can be found in the rest of the village. The issues surrounding the vacancy levels at ground floor of commercial units in the village were also observed during the visit. They were particularly apparent in the new building at the top of the village and it is a shame to see that it suffers from vacant shop units. The TidyTowns group are commended on their productive use of the ground floor windows for their anti litter awareness campaigns and other issues. The school, Scoil Chroist Ri, is very impressive indeed for a number of reasons; the namestone is lovely, the green flag was flying, the buildings were maintained to a very high standard and the adjudicator particularly liked the modern extension to the historical building as it manages to be modern as well as sympathetic to the original structure. Directly across from the school was the most unusual but very attractive parish of Killoran Church of the Sacred Heart and St Joseph. It is a lovely building and the standard of presentation was first-class. What appears to be parochial house adjacent to the church is also an attractive building while Mountain Inn (opposite) stood out. It is noted that your projects for 2012 include painting and maintaining a small number of derelict sites and this work is to be commended. The correspondence with the Council on this matter was also observed (as part of your submission) and it is hoped that this matter can be resolved in the near future.

Landscaping:

There was a wide range of high quality landscaping schemes in Coolaney to be admired. The large landscaping bed at the approach to the bridge is quite nice with a good diversity of species spotted. The new trees along the main street were observed along with the beds that were finished in white gravel and this added colour to the streetscape. The planters with their roses and the hanging baskets with their summer flowers on the lamp stands were also very attractive and added a burst of summer colour. The paved plaza area right beside Radharc na hAbhainn was observed and some of the landscaping is quite attractive and colourful in the planters provided. The wildflower garden in this location is also a nice idea. The attention of the adjudicator was drawn to the attractive landscaped area that accommodated the map of Sligo and it was observed that you are training the rose bushes to screen the natural stone wall. It is great to see that you are have planted for a number of seasons in this area as the photos in your entry pack indicated that these beds were brimming with daffodils during the Spring. It was further noted that spring and summer planting also takes place in the large circular bed at the town centre building. The treated timber planters also looked very well and it appears that the area is very well maintained as there was no evidence of litter or weeds. The lovely mature trees and attractive landscaping beds at the river walk also caught the eye of the adjudicator. Unfortunately, weeds were beginning to creep in to the landscape bed on the left-hand side of the entrance (adjoining the River Inn) and there was a small amount of litter present. The landscaped areas on the entrance to the Community Park looked very well and were being maintained during adjudication. The landscaping in the grounds of Scoil Chroist Ri was admired as they appear to have been completed to a high standard and are subject to regular maintenance. Millennium Park was a highlight for the adjudicator. This park, which represents another excellent amenity for local residents (and of course any others who wish to visit), is home to high quality, diverse landscaping and trees. The wildflower garden at the Community Park is an excellent initiative while your efforts to diversify your planting schemes to include shrubs as well as flowers are commended. Well done also on following the advice of the adjudicator in 2011 and sending in photos of your landscaping schemes with your entry form as they were a great help. The adjudicator liked your 'town of the roses' theme and this theme is clearly reflected in your landscaping projects throughout the town!

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The TidyTowns Group has certainly been busy with projects in 2012 under this category. We were delighted to read on your entry form that you have been planting mountain ash trees (at the top of Main Street) and that you are deliberately selecting plants (and projects!) that will make a positive contribution to biodiversity and

wildlife. The river walk appears to be the primary focus of your projects under this category and we certainly agree that the riparian habitats of rivers tend to be hotbeds of biodiversity due to their function as wildlife corridors. The provision of the bamboo insect homes are also noted. Congratulations also on your colourful information signage, which is most informative (and bilingual) and this further improves the riverwalk as an amenity. Does the information on the information panels come from a wildlife survey and management plan? If so, is this information available? The signage advertising various other walks such as the Sligo Way is to be commended and perhaps a sign/map could be provided showing how they could be accessed from your village. Have the group considered extending their river walk to link up with walks in adjoining areas? Or indeed walks that are included in the Sligo Way? In addition to the above, the biodiversity garden of Scoil Christ Ri was noted to the rear of the School and this is a lovely addition to the school while the provision of a wildflower garden close to Radharc na hAbhainn is also a nice idea.

Litter Control:

The standard of litter control in Coolaney was very good on adjudication day as the vast majority of areas inspected had no litter to be seen. Unfortunately, the village was not litter free with litter observed at the seating area just outside the paved Park area at Radharc na hAbhainn and a small amount of litter was also present at the entrance to the river walk (adjoining the River Inn). It is recommended that these areas are subject to additional monitoring during your litter patrols. Your work on raising litter awareness among the school children is to be commended as the posters were observed in the shop windows of the new development. The signs aimed at dog owners on the river walk were also noted.

Tidiness:

There is no question that the TidyTowns group has been working hard under this category as there was virtually no evidence of weeds to be found in any of the verges, the bases of the natural stone walls, or along the kerbs of the pavements in the centre of the village. Everywhere looked to have been cleanly swept and maintained so credit is due to the hard work of the committee as a very high standard of tidiness appears to have been achieved. You are also congratulated on the appearance of the Bring Bank, which was neat and tidy. Despite this high standard, improvements remain possible. In the view of the adjudicator, a signage audit is definitely needed with a number of signs (including the sign indicating the riverside walk) in need of washing and other improvements (such as painting the sign poles). The black and yellow traffic sign beside the river walk sign is also in need of attention, while the road sign on the Colloney/Ballisodare approach road indicating a sharp bend is approaching is in very poor condition and should really be replaced. The capping of the boundary wall of the Primary Daycare Centre will require painting for 2013, while the car park to the rear of the new development is a little untidy due to overgrown landscaped beds, weeds on the pavements and kerbs and unfinished surfacing on part of the car parking area. In Rockfield, the entrance to what appears to be the treatment plant is a little untidy and the gate would benefit from paint while the verge immediately opposite the housing area here is quite untidy looking. The red gate adjacent to the Mountain Inn would also benefit from paint. At Radharc na hAbhainn, the bench in the seating area will possibly need painting for 2013 as the timbers on the seat itself were losing its paint.

Waste Minimisation:

The focus of this category is to encourage tidy towns groups to minimise and even eliminate the production of waste while undertaking their activities. In this regard, we were delighted to read in your entry form that you have undertaken a number of projects under this category and you are commended on your extensive use of texting and the internet to contact your members and the rest of the community. Well done also on composting all the green waste that you produce and we were pleased to read that you intend to grow your own plants for next year. Have you engaged in rainwater harvesting? This could be a worthwhile initiative as your landscaping schemes include a significant number of planters and hanging baskets – both of which demand quite a lot of water! Your work on raising awareness of waste minimisation is also impressive with your promotion of a number of websites with relevant information. We also note that you have registered with green homes and that you are arranging a waste minimisation seminar with Sligo County Council.

Residential Areas:

The standard of presentation of individual houses and business premises was exceptionally high and all property owners deserve great credit for the work that they have undertaken. A number of residential areas were also observed. Radharc na hAbhainn, looked very well with well maintained green spaces, attractive entrance signage and well presented individual houses and gardens. Ard Laigne, Mountain Park and Bruach na hAbhainn also looked well. The modern estate of Sliabhgamph impressed as the green areas (with their semimature trees) were in good condition, the entrance stone was attractive and individual houses and gardens achieve a high standard of presentation. Fort Haven is an attractive new housing area with some nice landscaping beds at the front entrance. However, inside the estate (and closer to what appears to be the Little Haven crèche), the landscaping beds were untidy and in need of attention. The housing area opposite Gort na

Si, is reasonable with a quite well maintained green space adjacent to the road and some attractive semi mature trees but the presentation of individual houses was somewhat mixed. The residential area of Gort na Si was also impressive with a lovely landscaping bed observed at the entrance, attractive green areas and neat and tidy pavements and roadsides within the estate. The mature tree in the centre of the site is also most attractive. We were delighted to read that an inter estate competition is underway and that new estate name signage is being provided and more is planned.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads to Coolaney were generally good. The approach from Collooney is quite nice with trimmed verges and an attractive railway sleeper landscaping bed. However, the green Coolaney name sign is not in great condition and the 50 kmph signage and signage poles would benefit from cleaning. The entrance to Coolaney from the N17 approach achieves a slightly lower standard due to untidy verges at the 50 kmph signs while the name sign is becoming slightly obscured by the roses in the landscape bed. Well done also on getting the new footpath provided (with its tree beds) opposite the new development.

General Impression:

It was a pleasure to visit Coolaney and experience the work of the Tidy Towns Committee at first hand. In the view of the adjudicator, the success that the village have enjoyed in recent years is richly deserved and we would love to see you continue to improve in the years ahead. Keep up the good work and we look forward to seeing you in 2013.