

# Tidy Towns Competition 2013

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Straffan**

Ref: **385**

County: **Kildare**

Mark: **306**

Category: **C**

Date(s): **02/07/2013**

**23/07/2013**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2012</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2013</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	40	41
The Built Environment	50	36	36
Landscaping	50	36	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	37	38
Litter Control	50	35	36
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	12	12
Tidiness	30	23	24
Residential Areas	40	36	36
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38	38
General Impression	10	9	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>306</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

Straffan is welcomed to the 2013 TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your entry form, copy of your three plan for the village and supporting documentation. Your committee of ten dedicated people together with the Green Flag committee, who engage with you as part of their continued Green Flag projects are certainly keeping the flag flying for the village of Straffan. Your village situated in a rural setting among acres of rolling fields has an old world feel but with a modern twist. The village has not been damaged by the development that has caused extreme hardship to other TidyTowns groups across the countryside. The two participants seeking An Gaisce awards are wished well in their endeavours.

Your engagement with all the relevant agencies that are a vital source of support for you is very positive. This good relationship is enabling your group to set realistic goals, talk to the agency in question and be able to obtain support in whatever form is necessary to achieve your objectives. An example is your Hall Restoration project for which you have obtained grant aid for your work. This is an important focal point in the village and this confirms the good relationships and dedication you have for your village. The "Adopt an Area " project is a good way of giving a volunteer responsibility for a road or area and the results of this work, is easier for the group of volunteers to monitor.

Your communication method of text alert is fast, saves time and funds for the committee. The adjudicator is also pleased that your group is sourcing your plants for the containers and baskets locally and using the same supplier as the K Club and as a result getting the plants at competitive prices. There have been complaints from local suppliers that TidyTowns groups were not sourcing their plants locally, all enterprises are finding it difficult to survive so your local buying is commended. Is it any wonder people are praising you for the contribution you have made to the village, you not only help your own village but help others as well.

### The Built Environment:

On approach to the village from the Barberstown roundabout one encountered trees, stone walls, bollards and hedging, what an entrance. Scoil Bhríde is commended for its green flag status. The new extension to the old school gels together to create a modern facility that is in keeping with the surrounds. The school continued the nice trend of superb planting in the form of herbaceous plants.

The Community Hall is so important to the community and to the village, hopefully work will be near completed for next year's competition. The plans of the new extension were viewed and they are impressive. The Straffan Inn looked good but the white concrete planters in front need freshening.

Straffan GAA, an important amenity in this lovely village, was visited. The building was admired however dead grass at the entrance did take from the overall appearance. Two Churches form part of the streetscape of Straffan. The Church of Ireland and RC Church play a very important part in the history of Straffan. As stated in last year's report the RC Church needed painting and that is still the same for this year. The wooden arched entrance that led to a tree lined walk to the immaculately maintained cemetery was admired, just be careful of the overuse of weed spray along grass edges. The bustling area around The Mace shop and Post Office was good to witness.

One cannot talk about the built environment in this lovely village without mentioning the K Club. You are fortunate to have such a splendid complex as this on your doorstep. On the day of adjudication it was a joy to behold.

### **Landscaping:**

The entrance from the Barberstown roundabout has fine hard and soft landscaping and sets the tone for a high standard of landscaping which is not denied to the visitor. The well planned and structured approach to the village landscaping is evident in the carefully organised colour scheme that protrudes from nice containers tilted to show off the full array of colour. The two circular cornered amenity areas on each side of the streetscape featured seating and planting that offer a mix of stonework and floral displays that were most pleasing to the eye. The nice herbaceous planting outside the school complimented the nameplate planter of bedding plants. The introduction of fruit trees into the landscape on Boreen road will be an important addition to the landscape when they mature. A dead tree however in this area will require some attention.

Landscaping in Straffan is indeed a community effort and this is reflected throughout the village. The planting at the entrance to Coarsemoor estate was admired as was the many plantings of begonias throughout the village. The arrangement of hanging baskets and grouped tubs of planters adjacent to the church was an excellent display. The inclusions of unobtrusive tubs situated along footpaths were a nice inclusion as are the hanging baskets. They were in full floral display on the day of adjudicating. The planning of the landscaping is a credit to Straffan with even the post box being awarded a tub of flowers. The planting at the entrance to the K Club was also admired and the adjudicator looks forward to the new flowerbeds to be created around your TidyTowns winning signs. Be careful with any new planting as any planting at the base of trees is discouraged.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Straffan is again lucky to have some natural wildlife amenities on their doorstep, most notable the extensive wooded area surrounding the K Club and the river Liffey. The inclusion of labelling trees in the K Club will make the garden walk more enjoyable and educational. The completion of the planned Sli na Slainte route will be a welcome addition to the area and to this category. The steam museum and butterfly farm while not in the village centre are interesting and quiet unique to have in the area. It was good to see such an attendance on the day. The inclusion of all year round planting in the village was noted at the school and near the church which is encouraged and recommended by the TidyTowns unit.

The national diversity report included in your entry portrays the amount of wildlife in Straffan. This report is an important document as it will guide future developments and planned projects and help protect the natural heritage of Straffan.

### **Litter Control:**

Litter control in any area takes the involvement of the entire community. It is noted from your application that you have regular work nights to target potential litter black spots. The involvement of the local soccer team, GAA team, fishing club and school team is a big help to combat litter. The help of local students in litter control as part of their An Gaisce awards is a welcome addition to any area. It is this community spirit that is important in every category but more so in the control of litter. On the day of adjudicating the adjudicator made a thorough search of the area for litter. Very little was to be found on the day with Straffan being nearly litter free. Your work so far in this category is to be commended, do keep up the good work.

### **Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:**

Waste minimisation, as you state in your entry, should start prior to school going age or even at school going age. At this time children going to school have a big emphasis placed on reducing, reusing and recycling as part of the green school initiative. It is then the children will help educate their parents and the wider community and it sets in place a positive future for reducing waste. Your committee is well focused on reducing, reusing and recycling. The top of the pyramid is the most difficult to reach but progress is being made to reach this. Ideas you have been considering are a waste awareness survey, a bring and buy day and Christmas card recycling. All these ideas will create more awareness in the community. Well done on your series of car boot sales which is creating much needed funding for the restoration for the hall. The car boot sale also offers a way to recycle items that may have gone to landfill. Keep up the good work in this category.

## **Tidiness:**

As you drive through Straffan it exudes an air of tidiness. The removal of overhead wires adds to this air of tidiness and allowed the lanterns to become a prominent feature. It is this lack of overhead wires that has added much to the streetscape. In an area that has a tidy feel small things distract however. The car park at the football pitch looked untidy due to sprayed dead grass visible through the gravel. The flower bed inside the gate of the Church of Ireland was in need of some weeding. Some debris and leaves were visible outside the school which slightly distracted.

Signage was good throughout the village. Footpaths were clean and well maintained. It is good to see the absence of fly posting and unwanted signage throughout the village. The gate lodge at the entrance to the K Club could do with some painting especially on the fascia boards.

Tidiness is kept to a high standard in this category.

## **Residential Areas:**

Straffan has a mix of housing estates and individual residences. 'The Beeches' was noted and admired as a well-designed estate with neat planting. The Coarsemoor estate and Straffan gate were also noted and are a credit to the residents. Looking at the individual residences Straffan Cottage caught the eye and reminded the adjudicator of a picture postcard. The cottages on Boreen Road add to the charm of the village and again were well presented. It will be nice to see one of these cottages being restored to its splendour.

The residences throughout the centre are a credit to the residents that take such a pride in their area and their homes. Finally St Brigid's caught the eye and was again presented to a high standard on the day. Well done to all in this category.

## **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

The approach roads to Straffan are presented to a high standard. The approach from Barberstown roundabout was especially well presented. A mix of planting and maintained hedges was noted and admired. The approach road to the K Club was again presented to a high standard with the beautiful stone Liffey Bridge providing a suitable entrance to the village. As mentioned last year it is hoped to see the stone walls opposite the K Club restored to match its surrounds.

A gate at the Boreen Road bend is in need of some painting. Also a gate near the shop surrounded by wooden fencing was in need of some attention. The roads were in good condition as were the footpaths throughout the village.

It was noted that some bags, maybe containing sand were spotted at the rear of the Roman Catholic Church which distracted from a well presented area.

## **General Impression:**

It was an absolute pleasure to visit Straffan. From the approach there was a welcome feel and it is obvious that a lot of care and attention goes into Straffan. Do keep up the good work and the best of luck in the future of the competition.

## **Second Round Adjudication:**

This adjudicator was delighted to be visiting Straffan during the second round of adjudication visits. In addition to the points highlighted during the first round this adjudicator would like to recommend that you aim to consolidate your application form for 2014. Detailed descriptions of existing features or past projects are not required and may serve only to distract from important works that have been completed in the past year. Also try to keep details relevant to the category under which they are described, for example the K Club's water turbine would be better placed under the sustainable waste and resource management heading rather than wildlife and natural amenities. Do consult the Tidy Towns Handbook for further details. The central civic spaces of Straffan are beautifully presented with the churches, older residential houses and commercial properties working in perfect concert with the extensive tracts of mature landscaping. We look forward to the development of the church project over the coming years. As pointed out by the first adjudicator however planting of small flowers at the base of trees is neither desirable nor of any real impact. Copious displays of flowers on lamps along the main road are very effective however, well done. Litter control during second adjudication was also to a very high standard so congratulations on this continuing achievement. Best of luck with the impending installation of the Slí na Sláinte which no doubt will provide additional access to the town's natural heritage. The presentation of the old graveyard and ancient ruins is good but dead grass and debris were being dumped within the walls of this important heritage feature. You are urged to find an alternative solution. In general however the standard of presentation on the day of second adjudication was to a very high standard and the increase in points is happily endorsed.