

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Gowran** Ref: **392**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **290**
Category: **B** Date(s): **15/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	42	42
The Built Environment	50	38	38
Landscaping	50	40	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	35	36
Litter Control	50	30	30
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	11	12
Tidiness	30	18	19
Residential Areas	40	31	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34	34
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	287	290

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Gowran to the 2013 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for the comprehensively completed entry form which was very well structured and full of information. Be sure to clearly define which projects are being presented for assessment as part of this years' work and clearly note their locations on your map, in addition to highlighting general points of interest in the village. We are delighted to hear that you have an enthusiastic core TidyTowns committee of 24 members and enjoy close contact with your school. Have you considered building on this relationship by forming a junior TidyTowns committee through the school? Other committees have done this and have harnessed the energy and enthusiasm of your community's younger members. You seem to have a very proactive approach to addressing issues that affect you and your fellow residents and this structure seems to be working very well for you. It's no wonder you are all kept so busy throughout the year. Have you had a chance to do a review of your town plan up to 2015. Now is a good opportunity to review which projects have been completed and any issues that have hampered you. This can help focus your efforts, gain support, ensure all categories are covered for future works and so help you gain marks in the competition.

The Built Environment:

You have a wealth of antiquated buildings within the village which add so much to its setting. The community buildings in the town were well presented with the Church and the gardens of the adjoining parochial house admired. Your schools on Chapel Road were also well presented with the green flag flying proudly in the grounds. It is good to hear that Gowran Castle has a new custodian and is being brought back to life. The interpretative panels at St Marys Church provided a great insight into the site and really enriched the adjudicators visit. Have you considered taking this interpretation on to another level and developing a suggested walking route possibly taking in the old mill by the river and ancient tower house on Mill Road? Gems of your built environment easily missed by a passing visitor. Within the village the traditional frontage of your Pharmacy really adds to the village character and the neat and nicely presented frontage of 'Glasrai and Goodies' giving only a hint of the wealth of goods available inside including, it was good to see, locally produced stock.

Landscaping:

Well done in your investment in tree planting in the village. Ensure all tree ties are removed from trees after the first couple of growing seasons or once they become established to prevent them rubbing against the bark and

damaging the trees. The tree stakes along the trees at Chapel Road are in danger of pulling the tree and preventing straight growth as they mature. We thought the open space at the V at the top of Gowran between Paulstown Road and Goresbridge Road could benefit from a feature tree to fill this space and act as a landmark at the entrance to the village for future generations. Perhaps a single copper beech tree to match the beautiful specimen by St Marys Church. Position so it avoids the overhead wires here. For next year's submission perhaps you could include some seasonal pictures of the village to give us an idea of its landscape setting over the years. Have you invested in spring bulbs? If funding is difficult perhaps an alternative way of getting the work done is to have a "garden party" where all residents are encouraged to bring and donate some bulbs for the village (chosen from an agreed plant list), or perhaps set up a Gowran Gardening Group? You state that the landscape at the school was disrupted as a result of recent building work. When maintaining this area try to remove all sycamore seedlings from the roadside bed before they take root and compete with your other plants here. The High Garden was beautifully presented and the simple plant palette complements the historic setting and the mature trees which are such an asset for the village setting.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your submission shows you have an understanding of the types of habitats surrounding the village. Use your habitat survey map to see how your habitats link with each other. Networks of wildlife sites are more ecologically valuable than isolated wildlife areas. Where possible create linking corridors by planting, retaining, or even improving hedges, or keeping a strip of long grass along the road verges. Part of this category is about making sure the community as a whole also appreciates its rural setting and the importance of your surroundings and the nature it contains. To enhance a better understanding of the importance of our countryside as a natural resource, have you considered hosting events that celebrate and raise awareness of local species and your beautiful riverside habitat. These could be a 'dawn-chorus' bird-song count, a bat-walk, tree-planting day, wildflower walk or a talk from an expert. Assistance with these can be obtained from the Local Authority Environment Officer. Expert advice and information on wildlife conservation and management is available, often at no cost, from a number of agencies and voluntary groups including Birdwatch Ireland.

Litter Control:

On adjudication day the village core was free of litter although there was some recent litter by the bring bank near the school. Ensure this area is covered in your thrice weekly litter patrols. Well done to all in the school in helping address this category through their help in the litter picks. As you are aware this category is not just about the lack of litter but rather the approaches taken to address the ongoing control of litter and the development of a strategy to deal with problem areas. This you are tackling head on with your efforts to address the problem at Mill Road with the Council. Best of luck and keep up the good work.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Can we assure you that based on the tone of your application you most definitely are heading in the right direction in addressing this category. By recognising the practices already carried out in the community to reduce wasting resources you have earned additional marks this year. As you rightly state the elderly can teach us a huge amount about how not to live in a throwaway society. Have you considered compiling a list of older resident's ecological sound household or cleaning tips? These could be included as nuggets of information in your newsletter. Please include this in next year's submission so we can all learn some new tricks!

Tidiness:

Once again you presented a very tidy village and well done to all involved in the works this year. Like many villages around the county, empty premises are an issue for you. The works done to blacken the window boards on the house at the corner of High Street and Gorebridge Road by the Reptile Village meant I had to look twice to realise it was not occupied. Well done in successfully dealing with a potential eyesore. Good luck with your efforts at finding a new use for the Dome. Unfortunately the bins stored here make the matter worse so good luck with your discussion with the shop beside it and we hope they can find a less public space to store their bins. The bays between the car parking opposite the Church at Chapel Road were looking a little untidy and overgrown. Perhaps they are too narrow for grass? Consider removing the grass and replacing it with either gravel or perennial planting which may make maintenance easier. If using perennials chose species that flower during the spring or autumn so they can be fully appreciated by the pupils during term time.

Residential Areas:

There are a range of residential types in town and once again they were presented to a high standard on adjudication day. We admired the neat terrace of stone cottages on the main street along with some lovely Georgian frontages. The impressive entrance to Gowran Castle with its granite piers was admired and how lovely to think it will now be an active family home. Remove all tree ties from the nicely maturing open spaces at the Steeples. The old traffic cone by the seat at the entrance here should be removed as it is visible from the lovely Green area. The planters to the home with the blue door at the Green were also admired. Abby Grove was visited and well maintained as was Parkmore, but the black and white name sign at the entrance here could perhaps be repainted to improve its legibility.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Generally signage throughout the town was clean and easy to read. Verges on approach looked well and the

lengths of stone walling bounding your roadways add to the village setting and looked well maintained. The car parking area to the front of the Reptile Village could be improved and tidied up a little. To reduce signage clutter in the village the two children crossing signs on Chapel Road were an unnecessary duplication of signage. The smaller stand alone sign on its own pole could be removed.

General Impression:

Gowran is a charming village with such an impressive range of building types which tell the story of the villages' links to our shared past. Well done to all involved in this year's application and thank you for your hard work and commitment. We wish you all the best for all your planned work in 2014.