

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Abbeyshrule** Ref: **473**
County: **Longford** Mark: **314**
Category: **A** Date(s): **27/06/2013**
30/07/2013

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	46	47
The Built Environment	50	40	40
Landscaping	50	43	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32	32
Litter Control	50	41	41
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	10	11
Tidiness	30	23	23
Residential Areas	40	28	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	40	40
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	312	314

Overall Development Approach:

Abbeyshrule is most welcome to the 2013 National SuperValu Tidy Towns competition. Heartiest congratulations on your well deserved win in the overall award section in 2012. It's been quite a year for Abbeyshrule and it certainly put you in the spotlight nationally. Many thanks for your entry form and expansive additional information. As hinted by the second adjudicator last year there is scope to rationalise this additional material to only include that which is directly relevant to the contest. Your action plan made an appearance twice! It is most heartening to read how your big award seems to have redoubled efforts this year, you would have been forgiven for taking your foot off the pedal this year after all your hard work. You have been generous with your time and in particular in welcoming other groups from around the country so that they can tap into your success. Your big innovation for this year has been the establishment of the 'Tidy Tweens' and it is heart-warming to learn of this budding bunch and the fun activities that they are involved in. This goes to the heart of what a sustainable community looks like. Some areas have given their junior group a say in how they would like to see their village develop to make it more child friendly. No doubt the new playground would be top of their list. Well done on another very strong entry this year and everyone here at Tidy Towns shares in your happiness.

The Built Environment:

At this level of the contest it is hard to be continually innovating but yet you manage to have quite a wide range of small projects that are enhancing the built environment. The adjudicator is also looking here at how you promote the use of Irish so perhaps a project here would be worthwhile. The menu translation is a good start on this road. Also consider here how your built heritage is interpreted and one way of doing this would be to hold a heritage week event. Contact the heritage officer of Longford county council to see how this could be explored. Your pageant last year sounds like the perfect event to bring the Abbey to life. The Cistercian abbey is wonderfully presented and (the rather plain it must be said) interpretive information was read with interest. The more decorative signage at the graveyard entrance was also admired. The rural surrounds with well preserved old stone walls and graveyards create a most evocative scene. The modern Roman Catholic Church is beautifully presented and was flying a clean tricolour on a well painted flagpole. Rooney's bar is attractive in its simplicity while your latest monument to your success in Tidy Towns and Entente Florale will no doubt be a perpetual reminder to the community of the special place that this is. The Rustic Inn is well decked out with hanging baskets although the pink bicycle may be a step too far. The treatment of the unused building is excellent and the wonderful artwork was admired.

Landscaping:

Congratulations on your participation in the Entente Florale. Your tree survey was admired. The rural nature of Abbeyshrule dictates that any interventions be sensitive to the wider landscape of tall trees, green fields and native hedges. The Canal Harbour is picture perfect and highly manicured. This adjudicator fears that additional pots of flowers are unnecessary in this scene of great natural beauty. It is otherwise flawless with sturdy outdoor furniture and wildlife interpretation. Similarly the flowers attached to the bridge distracts from the simple beauty of the stonework that indeed has its own attractive community of lichens and ferns. Formal landscaping areas, for example on the road side near the bring bank have a well thought out composition and layout that perfectly complements the tall trees and native hedge that form the backdrop. The water feature and surrounds provide an attractive point of interest for the village centre. The corncrake installation is a unique and poignant attraction that serves as a reminder of lost heritage.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have a very well developed natural (or 'green') infrastructure with a range of marked walks to allow people access to local amenities. Your new leaflet on bog flora is most interesting. You can build in this category by continuously trying to develop an understanding of the value of our natural heritage. This can be done in a number of ways. You could hold an annual nature walk, guided perhaps by a local expert or invited guest. This could be held in conjunction with the biodiversity week in May or heritage week in August. You could also build on the survey that you commissioned by using its findings to develop new projects, for example learning to identify and record biodiversity through the website of the National Biodiversity Data Centre or www.biology.ie. You would therefore be contributing in a meaningful way to the body of data nationally. This area is also right for school research projects into individual species, using them to learn about evolution, as well as art or photography. A portion of the Inny walk was explored and it was felt that too much effort is being put into landscaping and maintenance for an area that is perhaps best left to nature. Not all the planted trees are doing well while the impression is one of excessive lawns and intervention when none is needed.

Litter Control:

The idea of removing Street bins certainly caught the eye of the national media when you won last year as well as that of other centres. You are as ever active and vigilant in tackling new issues such as dog fouling. You have also identified the problem of illegal dumping and it would seem that the only way to deal with this is by tracking down the perpetrators and using the courts. Sadly raising awareness will do nothing for some determined and irresponsible people. Litter control on adjudication day was top class and no litter was seen. Truly an endorsement of your energetic approach in this regard. Well done.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

The two schools are doing Trojan work and congratulations to both of them as they continue their green flag journey. Their wonderful artwork was admired in your additional information. You seem to have a well-developed composting initiative that is widely used and this is excellent. You are also tackling other areas such as energy usage and rainwater harvesting. The work of the Tidy Tweens here would best be described under the landscaping heading. Well done to the Rustic Inn staff who attended the talk on waste food and other environmental management issues. The participation of five households in the Longford County Council survey is intriguing and quite progressive, we look forward to the outcome of this initiative and seeing how they can be built upon to involve a wider catchment. The range of activities in which you are engaged to minimise your resource use is a shining example of how much can be done even in a small village. It shows great understanding of the challenges we face and the creativity that will be needed to overcome them.

Tidiness:

What to put in this category?! Everything about Abbeyshrule lends an air of tidiness and order. Signage is clean and clear and there is noticeable absence of ugly features. The continuing efforts to remove overhead cables are resulting in the unveiling of the skyline and the numerous architectural features above eye height. The number of flags were welcomed not only for their abundance but their good quality and vibrant colours. If one did have to find areas to be improved upon it would be suggested that metal fencing near the bring bank be replaced. However this was the only point of note throughout the tour.

Residential Areas:

Barley Gardens/Gairdin Eorna was admired for its unique bilingual name sign and immaculately presented homes. They are of an unusual design, providing further points of interest for the village. The standard of garden here in particular is first class. The garden here developed by the children is breathtaking in its imagination and sense of fun, what a joyful place this must be for a child. Corncrake Meadow (sadly the corncrake so long gone) is of a similarly high standard. More effort would be welcome to screen timber fencing. Your difficulties with unfinished elements of this estate are acknowledged and in fairness is well presented compared with some others around the country. Tree planting in the central area here needs a rethink as many seem to be dead or failing.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Well done on the new signage at entrance points as well as the numerous other servicing and repair works that

have been carried out. The approach from Longford is most picturesque and crossing the Canal bridge the well trimmed verges were admired. One doesn't ask is it quite necessary to mow such an expansive area along the canal side. In the name of resource conservation, as well as avoiding an over-manicured landscape, it might be worth restraining this somewhat. The old bog road installation is a nice feature. The new path from here creates safe passage while the black lamp standards are tasteful in their scale and design. It would be nice to see this path extended to cross the Inny bridge.

General Impression:

Abbeyshrule has now entered the pantheon of Tidy Towns national winners. It is a place you will hold forever and pass to the next generation. Do try to avoid the trap of over-pretification and excessive manicuring and decoration. Your core features stand on their own merit so a minimum of intervention is required. Your triumph this year is the involvement of the Tidy Tweens and we hope that we have seen only the tip of the iceberg of what these creative young people have to offer. Best of luck!

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure to visit last year's competition winner for the first time- it certainly didn't disappoint! The village looked beautifully maintained on the day and the enthusiasm and hard work of the committee and residents was very evident. This adjudicator would reiterate the comments made by the first adjudicator in relation to the volume of your submission with your application-remember less is more! The public and commercial premises of the village were admired on the day, of note being the striking modern church and the marvellous floral displays of the Rustic Inn. Those at the ramp in the centre of the village also looked magnificent. A large shed on the outskirts of the village sported some attractive murals at windows, and an integrated bird box! The Cistercian Abbey and associated graveyard were well maintained and is a marvellous piece of heritage to have so close to the village. A nearby gateway was admired for its unusual design. Gairdin Eorna looked marvellous and, indeed, housing stock throughout was well maintained and fresh. The willdlife sanctuary and bog oak sculpture on Bog Road were admired. In terms of streetscapes, footpaths and the bridge were well maintained. Some ducks were in evidence at the recycling area by the canal. Abbeyshrule is set in some magnificent natural scenery and impressed greatly on the day.