

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bunratty** Ref: **2030**
County: **Clare** Mark: **223**
Category: **B** Date(s): **30/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	29
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	28
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	6
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	29
TOTAL MARK	450	223

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Bun Ráite - Welcome Bunratty to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Your Entry Form and Tidy Towns Plan were nicely produced in a small booklet format. In doing this you did not change any of the category headings, but downloaded correctly from the hardcopy/website. This made it also easy to follow. It was a pleasure to use this publication on adjudication day. Visiting Bunratty as an adjudicator for the first time, it was interesting to see part of the village (which although we have passed through innumerable times - and visited as a tourist on other occasions) yet; on this occasion we saw the entire village for the first time.

Bunratty Local Development Association is a small new community group established 18 months ago. This is just your second Tidy Towns entry as a group. You have approximately 15 members involved in Bunratty Tidy Towns Development Association. You meet weekly in the busy season and fortnightly in the off-season. Your fundraising efforts are also social occasions. You are happy that new volunteers have joined you from the ranks of new residents.

You list six agencies, bodies, and businesses that have supported your activities. These include public bodies and private landowners, local businesses.

We note that most of your communication is by e-mail, but you also insert regular reports into the local media and the parish newsletter. We hope that you circulate minority churches, which may be represented in your area, also. You have a Facebook page. This is a good way of reaching out to the younger members of the community. Young people are helping you out regularly. Perhaps in time you will be able to organise a Junior Tidy Towns committee.

You say that the impact of entering the competition on the village has been enormous socially as well as making Bunratty an attractive place to live in and to visit. This is good to hear.

You have included your three-year development plan at the back of the Entry Form. This includes a two-page text and a clearly tabulated three-year plan. You still list some future projects in your Entry Form. Listing of such projects should be confined to your Tidy Towns plan – that is unless the particular project is phased over a number of years and you wish to explain the background and overall approach to the project – a phase of which you have carried out in the current year. Thank you for your clear map. The guidelines this year asked that each project be numbered sequentially through the Entry Form with corresponding numbers marked on the map. Unfortunately you have not done this. We look forward to such a layout in 2015

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Bunratty Foodstore/garage eastern boundary wall - facing oncoming traffic entering the village from the west - needs paint. On this curtilage tyres and a large mound of gravel should be tidied out-of-sight or screened.

Bunratty Manor is well maintained, as is the Courtyard bed and breakfast. We admired the appropriateness signs and the shrubbery around these premises. Gallagher's and Clarke's are also well presented.

The Creamery is well presented, as of course is the Castle!

You correctly state that the derelict site below Dirty Nelly's is a problem area. Even if the screening were intact and tidy - this would help. The tall ugly empty white advertising sign holder draws further attention to this poor area. We were glad to hear that the disused hotel has been sold and will reopen. As long as a premises stays closed the chance of its deterioration becomes more likely.

We note your improvement of the sculpture.

We observed that you do actually have bus stops even though you say you do not. We think you mean you have no bus shelter. The works at the Search and Rescue Centre involved the provision of cobble lock which had been upcycled from a ghost estate in the locality.

You have carried out works at the Old Creamery.

The derelict farm cottage is another problem.

You have not commenced the new signposted pathway to the graveyard, although you list this under the list of projects undertaken for this year. You say that this will make a more attractive approach to the graveyard and old mediaeval church. The existing access to the old graveyard and medieval church is nothing short of awful – both the actual access itself and the area it traverses in getting to the site. We know that you are going to improve the actual access (9 and 8 on your map) and create a pathway – but how are you going to screen the rear curtilage area of the hotel in views from this walkway? It seems a shame that a pristine folk village exists where the real village heritage is left in 'limbo'. Fencing and railings at the graveyard need attention, as well as the need for strimming around both, but we advise you not to carry out any works here without first consulting the County Architectural Conservation Officer and the County Heritage Officer. Quite frankly the approach to the graveyard is quite shocking! The graveyard itself is relatively well-cared for inside the boundaries.

We would encourage you to promote the use of Irish in public places and on public buildings throughout the village.

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Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The (2013) flower beds were replanted earlier this year. The site of 4,000 tulips and 3,600 daffodils must have been spectacular. Perhaps next year you might let us have a photograph of the village in springtime. Obviously by June or July the floral presentation is of summer flowers.

We would suggest that you desist from increasing the number of hanging baskets. Planting native shrubs and trees or seasonal flowers in the soil is much more sustainable and also more suitable for a rural village. There will always be places that would benefit from hanging baskets, but these generally will be problem areas, formal gardens or dreary laneways.

There are some specimen trees in the wonderfully landscaped Castle Gardens area.

We admired a lovely triangular grove of semi mature trees between Gallagher's and Clarke's and the Limerick bus stop. You have been carrying out Trojan work on the maintenance of all landscaped areas whilst adding your own touches.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fíadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

You have provided three nesting boxes. Wildlife friendly planting is proposed for Corbett area, and also hopefully for Costelloe's corner to the graveyard. You have provided many nesting boxes and log piles.

You say that no weed killer has been used. However we seem to have seen areas where weed killer had actually been used. Burnt grass and vegetation was noted – for instance on Hill Road.

You have constructed the insect hotel almost opposite the Rent an Irish Cottage property.

You live in a very rich area environmentally and you can move forward with plans to study/survey, interpret and manage your natural environment for the good of your village and its wildlife. We suggest that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to move forward with plans. You should also read the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. Engaging with schools (or colleges) on even elementary nature study surveys can lead in time to the further analysis and interpretation/presentation of the findings. We understand that Clare County Council has launched a biodiversity plan for the county. We suggest that you look into this plan and see how you can be part of the overall future of Clare's bio diversity.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

You have three rainwater harvesting butts. You reuse plastic parts for flower growing. You source everything you can locally. You aim to have your communications paperless. You use recycled/up cycled materials where possible. You have used fallen timber. You have two composters, the products of which you use in your work. At the picnic areas you are replacing existing bins with segregated litter bin. These are all admirable projects but recycling is only part of 'the story'. Sustainable waste and resource management is about trying not to produce waste in the first case. The Environmental Awareness Officer in your local authority would be an excellent contact to help you to put a programme together in relation to this topic. Perhaps you may be able to attend a sustainable waste and resource management seminar. In the meanwhile look at the Tidy Towns Handbook, and the revised guidelines on this topic - which were sent out with your Entry Form in 2013.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You carried out a major cleanup after the winter storms at the Corbett property. Costelloe's corner is now being included also.

We note the county council's request that a pathway should be developed between the green area and the new bus shelter. Further works include the work to the area behind Durty Nelly's, and the stone bed between the bridge and the Rescue Centre.

Well done on removing 10 redundant and unnecessary finger signs, thus reducing clutter. You have also got rid of several redundant poles. We noticed that there are still many advertising signs in evidence. An example would be as one approaches the area marked number three on your map - from the West - there is a plethora of signs on the triangular green space and locally. You have cleaned walls of ivy. You have provided new pathways and you have dealt with unauthorised advertising.

An entrance near one of the bus stops has two concrete bollards and a broken lantern. A plastic bottle was thrown on the ground here. We also noted a large wooden empty sign holder be on the cycle way sign on the opposite side of the road to number seven on the map.. Some weeds growing over the wall in this area also were in need of removal. Splay walls to Shannon Shamrock Hotel need repair. We imagine that this will be done with the new owners. Once again we noted two further large concrete bollards in a splay area.

A wooden pole and sign holder appears redundant behind the Rent an Irish Cottage (not Castle Gardens site) sign (outer sign from village). Some of the numbers were missing from the telephone number on this advertising sign. At the junction near Clarkes a small grey substation on the footpath had remains of graffiti. A short metal pole was thrown behind the substation. There were dirty plastic ties on an adjacent pole. On the opposite side - on the Hill Road - opposite the side entrance to the Courtyard - could the block shed be improved? Could it be plastered and could the timber eaves be fixed and the galvanised roof painted? This property is located in the Castle Gardens site.

A Limerick/Galway /Shannon road sign facing traffic emerging out of the village from the bus park is very dirty. The 'wrong way turn back' sign is also a dirty, and the use of weed killer was noticed in this area.

Some dead tree boughs at the Bunratty Manor Hotel village corner should be removed.

Signage attached to railings at the entrance to Bunratty Castle Hotel looked poorly. The main hotel sign adjacent looked well.

The litter bins are emptied by the businesses and your own volunteers. You conduct patrols where you fear litter and fly tipping occurs. You are promoting litter awareness. The local school has assisted you in this.

There was a very large scattering of torn paper litter in the grass area across the road (opposite) the Rent an Irish Cottage Castle Gardens site - north of the Shannon/Ennis/Limerick bus stop on the Western side of the road. On adjudication day volunteers were out watering the floral containers but totally unobservant or ignoring of the litter. It is hard to understand that the volunteers did not see this littering, as they appeared to pass up and down the village a number of times. One would expect that gathering this litter would have been a priorityincidentally a litter bin here needed repainting. There were two empty square floral containers on either side of the pathway exiting off the green space across from the bus stop also.

There was a small amount of litter opposite the Rent an Irish cottage entrance and a little litter between this and the

Courtyard.

There was some litter inside the bus stop wall opposite The Creamery Bar. The creamery Bar has a sign pinned to a tree. This is poor practice.

We noted a few pieces of litter around the Castle/bus car park.

Residential Streets & Housing Areas / Sráideanna Cónaithe & Ceantair Tithíochta:

You point out that most of the residents live on the Low Road and the Hill Road. Properties in these areas are well presented generally.

Dun an Rí estate is, as you say, unfinished, but the finished part of the estate looks very well. We were delighted to see the wonderful mature trees in this area retained. We also admired the younger trees along the entrance area.

The Rent an Irish Cottage Scheme (to the left of the approach as one approaches the village from the garage/Bunratty Foodstore) is well maintained.

On the Hill road approach we noted - what appeared to be an unfinished estate on the right-hand side. This estate did not have any name attached. But we guess from your text that this is Bun Ráite A site here is overgrown with broken wire fencing at a strategic corner. A 'for sale' sign was noted. The verges along the public road fence here need trimming.

The second Rent an Irish cottage scheme viz. Castle Gardens looked disused. Two buildings here looked redundant with weedy surrounds. We observed a broken lantern and three flagpoles with nothing on them. But the landscaped grounds looked very well. We noted a traffic notice pinned on a tree. This - as we have already said - is bad practice. Some dead boughs in this area require removal.

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Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes / Bóithre Isteach, Sráideanna & Lánaí:

Security railings exposed on the Low Road bounding the Folk Park are in need of augmentation with planting. A field gate opposite the winery junction looked poorly. This sign for the winery is tilted, and its pole is rusty. We noted a few pieces of litter around the Castle/bus car park. Some dead boughs need removal along this approach. Road signs had good striped black and white poles. We observed a poor farm gate on this approach and we also observed that the nice old green gate to the Castle site (near the village end of its lands) needs attention. We noted four small dirty bollards at the side of Dirty Nelly's as this road joins the village.

On the approach via the garage/Bunratty Foodstore we noted a large trailer parked on the hard shoulder. This trailer had no cab attached. This creates an untidy impression on entry to the village. We think that this may be used for water containers for planting watering. This is not a good arrangement with regard to the location of the trailer. East of the garage we noticed a bent gate opposite the 60 K pH speed limit. There was evidence of weed killer and non-trimmed approach immediately in front of the 60 K pH speed limit. A large road sign as one approached the 60 K pH speed limit was partially obscured by vegetation. A footpath in this area needed sweeping and the removal of a dead bough as one approached the food store/garage. We admired the nice flowers along the garage frontage boundary.

We have already mentioned the unfinished estate on The Hill approach road. The 60 K pH speed limit sign was completely turned. There was a redundant rusty pole beside the speed limit sign. We noticed burnt grass here – evidence of some weeds killing. This approach was in need of verge trimming. A lovely entrance with a gate Lodge did not look cared for as it was very weedy. There was a weedy entrance on the right-hand side. We would encourage you to paint farm gates on this and on all approach roads. This gives a unity to the village, and creates a tidy impression on entry. Shrub and floral planting along the verges of this approach looked really well. This type of planting in the soil looks appropriate and colourful. We admired a nice dry stone wall along the left-hand side of this approach. Some stones were missing from the top of this wall. We would suggest that you remove the remaining stones 'topping' this dry stone wall, as we feel that they create too fancy an impression. Lime mortar might be used to seal the wall on top instead. You should consult your County Architectural Conservation Officer in this regard.

Road markings throughout the village were clear.

On the Limerick approach to the bridge there was a mound of chippings. However, as works were going on at the bridge, we assume that this is a temporary measure.

Road works were taking place along the road by Corbetts/Costelloes.

