

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: Clarecastle	Ref: 1082
County: Clare	Mark: 268
Category: C	Date(s): 02/07/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	39
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	29
TOTAL MARK	450	268

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Droichead An Chláir. Welcome Clarecastle to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Having 20 people directly involved in your Tidy Towns group is excellent representation. You work under the 'umbrella' of Clarecastle Community Development Ltd. You meet on a monthly basis during the winter and on a bi weekly basis during the spring and summer.

You get huge support from many groups within the town and parish. Local businesses support you. You welcome newer residents.

The local national school assist with Spring Clean Week and other projects. You also work with the GAA club who also helped with the Spring Clean.

We were glad to welcome you back to the competition in 2011, and we are glad to hear that you have gone from strength to strength since then. We understand how you have now reclaimed your village character. You are currently working to your Clarecastle Tidy Towns and Environmental Improvement Strategy May 2013 which was funded by LEADER. However we feel that you should compile a specific Tidy Towns Plan. The Matrix Plan contained in the Environmental Improvement Strategy may be too ambitious for you, and in any event it has a very long-term time scale due to its comprehensive nature. Given current economic circumstances it is likely that a lot of the objectives will be long term. A three year plan will focus your mind on what exactly you can hope to achieve. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any recent statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to the town in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of such a plan. Your map was a great help to the adjudicator as it was clear and gave precise information.

Your main communication is via the weekly newsletter. You use the local media, but you also use modern communication methods which are sustainable and engage with young people. We hope that you involve other churches represented in your area besides the majority Pastoral Council.

Thank you for all the interesting documentation which you sent us. Sometimes when we revisit your town we hopefully will be able to access some of these publications ourselves, and take our time enjoying the entire and varied 'menu'.

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

In relation to derelict sites and unoccupied buildings you have completed an audit which has been sent to the local

authority. Action has already commenced on some property the subject of this audit. You have already improved two derelict properties. Unfortunately you are quite let down by the vacant Coach House/cream and red building on the corner of Barrack Street and Patrick Street which is looking very poorly. Its poor state of 'presentation' was made worse by the attachment of a village market banner (covering an auctioneering sign). These banners and advertisements draw the eye to the building, although it would be impossible to miss this building given its strategic location. Please let us know next year what efforts you have made to trace the owner and to negotiate some sort of upgrade. We know it is on your list – but please make it a priority.

You have been working on the improvement of street furniture and village and estate nameplates. Be careful with the colour black in relation to street furniture. It is the most difficult colour for a person with visual impairment to see.

Your heritage projects bring people to appreciate the built heritage in your area. In particular we found the Pilgrim Route project to be most interesting. You have had various other events in relation to your entire built heritage – such as heritage tours and exhibitions and promotional videos. Well done on this. But do not let your existing heritage suffer whilst extending yourselves on additional projects. We suggest that you put emphasis on the town centre until you have addressed the main problems there.

You encourage shop owners to reduce clutter in their shop fronts. This appears to be having some effect. Abbey Hall has too much signage on the building and in the windows. The disused holders should be removed. The gable of the Hall facing towards the centre needs paint. Stays on poles adjacent would appear to have been leftover since election time. There was clutter of signage/projecting lights/air conditioning units/ aerials etc. on the Centra building..

The church was well presented.

You really have drawn very little attention to - what this adjudicator considers to be a wonderful part of your town. This is the Quay area where we admired the excellent traditional housing on the approaches to the Quay – most of which were beautifully presented.

A corrugated gate at the Old Hospital building needs painting. By contrast Slattery's yellow and green two storey house adjacent is extremely well presented. It has retained its timber sash windows and traditional door frame with plain good fanlight.

The Health Centre is well presented. A few shrubs planted on the site would look well. The gable of the newsagents on Patrick Street has advertising and needs paint.

The GAA premises is a very fine development. The clubhouse was painted in the Clare colours. We admired the planting in front of the building, but perhaps additional landscaping can be provided in appropriate areas on the site. The security fencing was chosen in green which was helpful. From here it was possible to view the 'vastness' of your school which was under reconstruction. As a result no Green Flag was flying.

We commend the Roche development for its restrained signage. The property is well presented generally, and the footpaths in the area are clean.

The graveyard below the Roche site is neat. The green security fencing beyond the Roche development (near the graveyard) is raw, and would benefit from landscaping.

The water tower would benefit from painting and the very raw metal security fencing at the tower site would benefit even more from painting/landscaping. We observed a derelict site beside the water tower.

Patrick Power is a well presented business. The District Day care building was very clean. The front elevation of the Scout Hall was painted.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

At the Quay the white bollards looked really well, and the boat with the red floral display/anchor was appealing. Road works were happening here, so we assume this area will be very much enhanced in the future. On our visit the area was tranquil and peaceful and residents/visitors were enjoying a little fishing. People could pass through your town without realising that this amenity existed. We suggest that you highlight the existence of the Quay in some suitable way.

The area around the District Day-care and Scout Hall was very poorly presented and seating (white) was 'lost' in a 'sea' of tall grasses. This area is just beyond your shortly-to be-opened playground. It would be important to attend to upgrading this area.

We admired the Park at the GAA stone. The neat white seat looked well. Flagpoles in this area were bare. The Park was litter free. At the Famine Memorial we would prefer to see planting in the ground rather than in pots. And in particular such planting should be of native deciduous trees/shrubs rather than the evergreens which have been planted in the pots at the Memorial.

You have converted some open space behind the Main Street car park to a new community playground. However on adjudication day this seems to have 'missed' its projected opening date. 10 mature native trees have been

planted in advance of the opening.

We admired the nice plant and vegetable garden at the community garden area beside the GAA access.

You maintain grass verges, public roads and hedges.

You have worked with the local authority and the NRA to improve the level of landscaping on roundabouts. You planted a boat on the Limerick approach.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:

The parish map indicates interesting wildlife and fishery aspects of the adjacent Fergus estuary. You also have produced promotional videos on wildlife and biodiversity.

You have discovered unique flora (rare orchid) at the Quay area and you have made a formal decision to protect this area and to discontinue annual mowing.

You have published an Abbey to Abbey walk wildlife leaflet including the biodiversity, flora and wildlife of the area. Another publication has related to the fauna of Ballybeg Woods. A Fergus estuary survey was carried out and used in your publication about the parish and townlands of your area. We are quite certain that these publications have raised huge interest in the wildlife habitats and natural amenities of your area. Research is being carried out on a particular newt resident in the area.

Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming, you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Consult with the local authority if there are road safety issues involved.

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

You work with your industry/business, educational and residential population to further your waste minimisation efforts. You say that you have engaged with the leading local pharma company - and your interest in their environmental performance is good. You have the Imeco farm which is an educational resource in your midst. The local Green School, is working on their own green school waste minimisation programme. Well done to the school on their achievements in this programme. Perhaps next year you can give us further details of waste minimisation projects which are new or on-going.

You are introducing residents to advisory websites. You have circulated 'use energy wisely' through a directory which was delivered to every household.

You are working on a four R'S policy document.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have adopted the bring bank locally. You say that you have completed work in improving this area. The bring bank area was relatively clean but featureless and dull. The bins had torn notices and were a bit grimy. There were a few pieces of litter around and a large plastic object was abandoned behind one bin.

You segregate litter. You manage kerbside weed control. A major cleanup was carried out in the People's Park/GAA grounds. All public walls were washed and painted. You worked with the local authority to clean up after the spring storms. You have cleaned a hoarding. You are cooperating with the NRA in enforcing a 'no advertising' signage on roundabouts locally.

You identify some major dumping spots and are endeavouring to eradicate such. We understand how passing traffic can still be a major source of litter. We are not sure that antilitter signs will affect these litter louts at any level. Furthermore a plethora of anti-litter signage can in itself cause clutter.

You do not tell us how often your litter patrols happen at various times of the year. You will read in the Residential and Approach Road categories of where litter was noticed. It is not a major problem – but an omni-present one for you.

Fly posting was a big problem on adjudication day. A number of diamond shaped fly posts for 'buy a brick for the community playground opening May 2014' were noticed around the church area and elsewhere. There was quite an amount of fly posting around the Quay Road junction with the Main Street. Approach roads had a lot of fly posting (see relevant category).

There was a lot of wirescape around the single storey cream coloured building near the Quay

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

You have encouraged the establishment of residents associations. You worked with the council to increase the frequency of grass cuttings in the open spaces of estates.

Residents carried out a major cleanup of the laneway at the rear of the Clare Hill estate.

Some properties on the bridge side of the village would benefit from repainting.

An estate with a stone wall on the Kildysart road appeared to have no name sign attached.

Inis Clair had a nice simple stone entrance and is presented in a neat fashion. We noted fly posting near the access. The estate has neat weed free footpaths and a cycleway. The properties in this estate are well cared for.

Ardán Iosef appeared to have no name plate. This estate was located on a connector road between the Kildysart road and the Ennis road. There was some litter in this estate. We admired the nicely cut green edging with good trees and the pretty wall-side bedding. There was cheerful and clean Clare bunting in this estate. There were some poor footpaths and road edges in places. There was some rotting wood in the hammerhead at the top of the estate, and a warning sign re-litter had fallen off a pole. We observed the use of weed killer, but overall this was a well presented estate. We admired the roses display at number 74. There was haphazard parking within the estate. A large Green facing the main road in the general St. Josephs Terrace area looked really well. Good tree edging around the Green was admired. The red and white house at number 11 by the statue was very well presented. The unadorned but simply presented village pump at the edge of the Green looked very well. On exiting the Green we admired a dry stone wall across the road.

Madden's Terrace was well presented. The adjacent t Michael Terrace looked gleaming. Some houses behind the Famine Memorial would benefit from repainting.

Aonach An Chlair estate once again had fly posting at the entrance and in the grass (for the village market). The single storey houses at the entrance were very nicely landscaped. The estate is all very nicely landscaped.

At Church Drive (?) two houses remain to be finished. These face the public road. We admired a nice stone wall here.

Coill Beechwood has a nice gravel bed of shrubs on both sides of the entrance

Sli an Fheargas development at the Quay utilises the lovely old stone wall boundary and entrance.

Non estate houses in the centre and along approaches were in general well presented.

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

You have an agreed project with the local authority in relation to the village footpaths. Perhaps you can elaborate on this next year.

You have a large number of approach roads. You are endeavouring to keep roadside verges clean and tidy. All stonewalls are maintained. A major cleanup of the Clare GAA entrance was carried out stop

As one approaches Clarecastle from the old Limerick road we noted an empty sign holder approaching the 60 K pH speed limit. The Clarecastle village sign was located in the grass margin - which was untrimmed around the sign. There was a commercial sign on the same side of the road. A sign for the County Clare show was located in the grass margin. At the bridge we observed some fly posting. Cars on display by the roadside created an untidy impression. The very large hoarding displaying a popular recent film advertisement detracted from this approach. However we think that this hoarding probably has 'squatters right's at this stage – being on this road possibly for a long time. There was a weedy path in evidence. We admired the seat in the recess by the bridge. The bridge has bright flowers.

As one enters the village after crossing the bridge there is a long grey hoarding on the right-hand side which has a weedy access and an ugly barrier.

A village market and large regatta sign was noted on the approach from Ennis.

On the Kildysart road approach we observed a scattering of litter opposite the stone walled estate and an untidy gate entrance just at the 50 K pH speed limit sign. Verge trimming was required in places. We observed some further litter nearer the village. There were also weeds along a concrete post and wire fence. Some domestic set back areas were unsurfaced, and gave an untidy appearance to this approach. We noted an unsurfaced weedy footpath and 'headless' road sign. Some further fly posting was noted on this road. There was some litter on the connector road between the Kildysart Road and the Ennis Road.

The Ballybeg Woods road is a hilly suburban road with a very poor surface in places until it meets a junction near whom they are new footpaths and a long wall with a large hoarding for housing development. We did not observe a speed limit sign in this area. We observed quite an amount of what appear to be chemical weeding killing on this approach. We also noted parking on the grass verges and some litter. There was poor signage facing the arriving traveller on this road on contractors' premises. There was litter in the recess of this premises also and broken s tone wall capping.

The Islandavanna approach has a poor surface. This is a very suburban approach to the town with sprawling suburban development. The speed limit sign here is very far out from the town centre. There are housing estates on this approach with no names on-the-ground. Verge trimming was needed at the 50 K pH speed limit sign. Some weeding would also have been helpful. Nearer the town the speed limit signs were facing in different directions. Gravel was piled in front of an entrance to a nameless estate. Once again we noticed a double 'headless' road sign. There was a rough overgrown patch beyond the newsagents on this approach. We noticed some apparently recent hedge cutting on this approach. Please refer to our comments under Wildlife

We would strongly recommend the painting of field gates on all approach roads and throughout the village. This gives a tidy and unified feel to any centre.

There was a 'headless' sign opposite the black railings near the Roche development

We noted on-going road improvements at the Quay.