

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: Cooraclare	Ref: 722
County: Clare	Mark: 260
Category: A	Date(s): 19/06/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	35
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	7
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	27
TOTAL MARK	450	260

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Cuar an Chláir. Welcome Cooraclare to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You clearly identify your meeting schedule which is appropriately frequent during the summer period.

We are impressed to see Kilrush Tidy Towns committee named in your list of agencies, bodies and businesses that have supported you. It is lovely to see this cooperation - despite the competitive aspects involved!

You have varied means of communication – traditional and modern. There is an excellent programme of cooperation between the schools and Tidy Towns in Cooraclare. The important thing is the way your work helps the village to be a better place in which to live. You also acknowledge the importance of the village being a pleasant place for visitors/tourists as well.

Your map is rather basic, although it does show the projects for consideration in this year's adjudication. Whereas you have submitted a list of projects which you hope to achieve over the next three years, we would encourage you to submit a somewhat more detailed Tidy Towns plan. You should indicate which years each project will be carried out - or where relevant the details in which a phased project will be carried out. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Cooraclare in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five-year plan.

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

The village has a good vernacular streetscape with good traditional buildings juxtaposed along the main street.

The church is beautifully landscaped and well presented. The Post Office is neat with a good ramp. However we felt that there were too many notices in the window which rather detracted from its appearance. We admired the tea with the Clare colours in the window! The florists had too many exhibits on the footpath – which could obstruct wheelchair or buggy users.

A terrace of houses facing the entrance to the village from the Kilrush approach looked well.

Some corrugated roofs towards the bridge end of the street and some white walls on both sides of the street in the same area require painting. A gable - as you rise up the hill past the post office - on the right-hand side needs paint, particularly as this is in a prominent position.

The school was generally well presented. There were some weeds at the outer limits of the school boundary wall, and the school gate was a little rusty. Could the steel railings be painted here?

Your bridge is a beautiful arched structure. The empty hanging basket holders (we understand your new planting policy and approve of it) on the bridge should be removed according to advice from your County Architectural Conservation Officer so as not to damage the fabric of the bridge.

Well done on your stone wall repairs. It is important to repair in the traditional fashion using lime mortar where mortar is required.

Cooraclare Community Centre looked well, but the Clare flag at the centre was frayed, and there was an empty flagpole there also. An abandoned rubbish bin was thrown in the corner of the field beside the Community Centre.

We admired the terrace of houses with the 'Considine' premises. O' Doherty's was clean. We felt that there was too much external projecting signage on Tubridy's.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Although you mention cleaning of the river area, planting, and repairing seats and a table under the Built Environment section, we consider them here under the Landscaping and Open Spaces section. We consider also the maintenance of the church area, flower beds and lawns here, although you mention them under the previous category heading.

You have moved from an emphasis on the creation flower beds, window boxes and baskets to a more sustainable approach to landscaping and planting. We look forward to seeing native trees and shrubs thrive in your village. Such planting is also much more visually appropriate to a rural village.

We note that you cut all green areas and lawns on a weekly basis. You maintain the bridge and river areas. We particularly admired the purple rock plants in the traffic island/triangular space which included road directional signage.

The grotto area is well looked, after apart from some adjacent weed killing and two plastic small flower troughs which looked poorly near the stone wall.

The landscaped area around the bridge was detracted from somewhat by the presence of an old rusty bicycle. A 'picnic table' broken slab – in front of a seat here could be upgraded.

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

Well done to the senior classes are currently doing a project in the river area. We are sure that the adjudicator in 2015 we look forward to seeing your information point based on the schoolchildren's survey. You are getting advice from Clare County Council. This is a good way to approach this project and the County Heritage Officer and the Biodiversity Officer will be of great assistance to you on this project.

We noticed some 'burnt' vegetation – the result of weed killing at certain places. This looks poorly, and detracts from your village. We would encourage you to consider nonchemical methods of weed control. If you speak to your County Heritage Officer, we are sure that you would be well advised in this matter.

With regard to hedge cutting - 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. Please be careful of this in future years. If road safety issues are in question consult with the local authority.

Your marks are extremely high already in this category for what we could see has been achieved to date.

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

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.

We noticed the solar panel on the new extension to the school. We are glad to hear that the children have established a water saving programme.

We note your new composting area in the churchyard, and in the school. The school has a Green Flag. The pupils therefore can be a rich source of inspiration to the community.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

A rota system is a good idea with regard to vigilance in relation to tidiness and litter control.

You say that you control the growth of grass and weed on your footpath and kerb areas. However you do not say what particular method of control you use. The village was more or less litter and weed free. But we have concerns about the use of chemical weed killing methods. To further improve your marks in this category we suggest that you put together a litter management plan for the village. Looking at the County Litter Plan will give you ideas.

The playground committee help you to ensure that the playground is litter free.

The Clare flag at the community centre needs renewal as it is frayed.

We would suggest that you consider a painting scheme for all the field gates throughout the village and on the approach roads. This will give an identity and unity to the village and will also look tidy.

An ochre coloured wall near the church needs repainting.

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

A lot of the buildings in the main street are residential and they are well presented.

Boundary walls are painted on an annual basis. You encourage people to maintain their own property well.

A white house, with a pretty garden descending to the bridge, looked extremely well in this strategic location.

The old parochial house sign needs repainting and also has a bent bollard.

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

Although you mention submissions to the local authority in relation to requested repairs of footpaths and bridge under the Residential Streets category, we consider it here under the Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes category. The stone wall repair project is going apace on approach roads. You trim verges on these roads also.

On the Kilrush approach we noted a large yellow advertising sign. Further advertising for Lotto/Bingo at the 50 K pH speed limit sign was observed. The village sign with its adjacent flowers and shrubs was admired. The nice triangular green space with a tree looked well.

The road from the GAA grounds drops nicely to the valley floor, to the bridge and to the village. Tall grass could be trimmed approaching the 50 K pH speed limit. A gable facing this approach needs painting. Another country road (which joins the road from the GAA grounds) has beautiful views of the village and it is treed surroundings. A house with poor boundary, and with a good barn needing some attention, was noted on this approach. We also noted some evidence of weed killer at the immediate approaches to the village here. This country road needs resurfacing.

Parking on the footpath in the village appeared to be a problem. This is both obstructive to footpath users and looks untidy. We noticed on adjudication day that you have a major problem with the amount of traffic driving through the village without keeping the speed limit. Perhaps you would discuss this with your local authority. The possibility of an attractive traffic calming scheme – which does not involve bollards, signs, lamps and other engineering solutions would be appropriate for your village.

The Milltown Malbay approach is quite poor. Generally sites and properties on this approach road are in need of attention. Here too we saw evidence of extensive weed killing. Hedge cutting was in progress on adjudication day as far out as the 80 K pH on the Milltown Malbay side. Please refer to our comments re-this issue under Wildlife. A stony bank on a low retaining wall on the left as one enters the village needs upgrading. Last year's adjudicator also drew attention to this wall.

The Doonbeg approach has a disused yield sign beside the new yield sign. Cream walls on the left-hand side approach need paint, as do cream gate piers and a white gate at a stone wall splayed entrance. An overgrown garden to a derelict property was noted. The school had a clean Green Flag flying proudly. Around the 50 K pH speed limit sign high grasses need to be trimmed. The 50 K pH sign on the right-hand side is grubby although you wash and paint road signs on the approach roads. An unsurfaced domestic setback opposite the school was noted. There were a road works sign on this stretch of road. We admired beautiful mature trees on this approach to the village. The recycle bins near the Co-op were looking well, but they could be improved with some landscaping. We noticed a fly post at the Doonbeg directional sign.

Near the approach by the grotto we noticed a rusty gate just inside a twisted 60 K pH speed limit sign. The village sign here is completely obscured by shrubs. A nice stone-edged flat raised bed to the left was being repaired. All repairs to stone walls should be carried out using traditional lime mortar. Some evidence of weed killing was noticed here also. In this vicinity a 'caution children' sign was faded.

Some footpaths in the village would benefit from repair.

