

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cranny** Ref: **65**
County: **Clare** Mark: **267**
Category: **A** Date(s): **19/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	42
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	31
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	40
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	7
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33
TOTAL MARK	450	267

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Crainnaigh - Welcome Cranny to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Although you have an extremely small population, you are enthusiastic and anxious to improve your lovely village. Having five on your committee out of a population of 31 is excellent representation. You hold regular Tidy Towns meetings, but you say that you cannot get new members. You would welcome some young members. At present the membership is all ladies – so obviously we think it would be good if you could encourage some male members to join. Due to emigration a lot of the population are in an older age cohort, but you are happy to keep the village in a pristine condition for the sake of the older residents, as well as for your own sake.

Your local pub has sponsored you, and the group went out on St Stephen's Day with the wren. That is a novel fundraising activity, and it perpetuates a long-standing tradition!

You communicate through a newsletter. Well done on your cooperation with the sixth class students in planting schemes. We are not surprised that people admire the village when they visit.

Thank you for your helpful map. We would encourage you to submit a Tidy Towns plan – a three or five-year plan will focus your mind on what 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 statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Cranny 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. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2015.

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

We are sorry to hear that the January storms gave you another issue to deal with - in that the roof was blown off a property near the bar. However we are sure that you will, in time, find a solution. You have dealt with the derelict cottage near the river in a most tasteful fashion. We have every confidence that you will do the same with other neglected and abandoned properties in time.

We would encourage you to use local stone in any new boundaries. Dry stone is quite traditional in the area, but if you use mortar, use lime mortar. A good example of this is adjacent to the old school.

The Church looked well. We particularly admired the graveyard gates. Rose cottage is wonderful, but the derelict property - which is full of character - beside it - looks sad. The intermittent concrete block type edging in front of the derelict house is not attractive.

The old school is a lovely building, and is architecturally intact. We would love to see it finding a new use. Perhaps you could speak with the Architectural Conservation Officer in your local authority with regard to this. It is now rare to see the original fenestration in a traditional national school retained. We suggest a joint approach in relation to architecture and wildlife. See our comments below re swifts. We also particularly admired the older Irish script foundation sign on the school.

We admired your small tasteful sign Fáilte Go Crainnaigh located on a neat grass bank near the bridge.

The public house looks a little bare, and would benefit from some landscaping in its curtilage. We noted the interesting Cranny Virtual Library sign on a yellow colour cottage. This is 'a first' for this adjudicator – not having come across a Virtual Library elsewhere. It is good to see the re-use of the house as a public amenity. We think this may have been a post office or shop, as there is an old 'licensed to sell stamps' sign attached to the wall.

We admired a very clean freshly painted single story house on the hill with delightfully planted stone beds on its downhill side,

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The bridge and riverside area is an absolute delight. You have maintained its natural landscape extremely well, while yet opening the area for public use and enjoyment. It is a green oasis, with the lovely sound of water adjacent. You maintain it in a very natural state, and this is to your credit. The landscape on either side of the bridge is quite different – one open, flat, and fairly treeless; the other treed and landscaped. We note that you planted some semi-mature trees on the more treeless side. Well done on the planting of your alder trees. Thank you for the 'before' and 'after' photographs of this area north of Cranny Bridge. These are doing well. We very much admired the green corner landscaped area opposite the riverside landscaped area. This is where your biodiversity sign is located. At this junction we admired the clean directional signage, together with the picnic area and the planted boat.

It is great that the students in school have been involved with your flower beds planting at the school and in the village.

Attaching hanging baskets to power poles is not generally a good or safe idea.

The landscaped area across from the church is also good. We admired a nice stone bank behind a derelict adjacent property. We would suggest that you plant in the raised grass bed here rather than in pots. We would also suggest that tyres are not used for planting such as at the school area.

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

Cranny is a very peaceful village, where the predominant sound is that of birdsong. Like other visitors, the adjudicator found the wildlife board very interesting. It is located in a very quiet place, where it is most enjoyable and informative to read about the local habitats. We were delighted to see that you have used the Irish words for the various species on the biodiversity sign.

We noticed that some hedges appeared to be recently trimmed in the hill area between the Cranny village sign and the village - as one approaches from the south-west. 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.

It seems that some weed killer had been used along the footpath on the right-hand side as one approaches the village from the bridge and in many other areas throughout the village. The remaining 'burnt' vegetation looks poorly, and detracts from your lovely rural quality. 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.

One of the most engaging sites seen in Cranny was the total 'takeover' of the old school building by swifts/swallows. They were very busily flying backwards and forwards to their nests under the eaves. They obviously were very disturbed by the adjudicator's presence! This is something that you should really investigate with your County Heritage Officer and County Biodiversity Officer. Some other Tidy Towns groups are involved with programmes in relation to swifts/swallows. Perhaps a joint approach to the architectural conservation of the old school – together with an approach to study and find funding for fund swift research (and architectural conservation) might be possible? You will need a lot of help with this, but there is no harm in asking!

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

The school was not flying any Green Flag. Is the school involved in the Green Flag programme? The Green Flag programme is a very useful educational programme both for the students and their parents, which in turn transfers to the participating communities. It is an effective way to be active in relation to sustainable waste and resource management. You could also consider getting involved in the Green Homes programme.

Segregating litter is fairly low on the sustainable waste and resource management pyramid, as is recycling - such as your clothes recycling. We feel that you would very much benefit from some help in progressing your marks in this category. 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:

The two Clare flags flying on the graveyard gate were unusual, and were probably put there to include deceased Cranny residents in Clare's 2013 glory! This seems a nice idea!

Would there be a possibility of painting all gates - including field gates - within the village boundaries in a chosen colour. This makes for a very unified and tidy appearance.

The remains of a flag should be safely removed from a pole within the village. A rusty black pole was noted beside the school.

The yellow and black striped road safety paint on the bridge might be renewed. Please check with your local authority Architectural Conservation Officer in relation to any such works on the bridge.

It is a pity that chippings are stored in the recessed space at the bridge. This does not contribute visually to your great work in this area, and detracts from the ICA raised circular planted bed in this space. Could you ask the local authority or whoever is responsible to see if they can find an alternative solution to chippings storage? Would it be possible at some time to surface the wide unsurfaced area opposite the pub/church area and in front of the green wall and tree planting?

Well done on your litter cleanup during the Easter holidays. Full marks to the students who assisted you. It is obvious that you regularly patrol the village for litter, because we only saw one or two pieces of litter in the village on adjudication day. That is, apart from the litter which has accumulated in the roadside ruined house, above the church on the opposite side. We see that you segregate the collected litter and take it to the local recycling centre. You are a committed five people taking care of the four litter bins in the village and emptying them regularly, as well as taking the contents to the recycling centre at your own expense. This shows commitment. On adjudication day the litter bin just outside the graveyard was just full, but was not overflowing. The clothing bank was cleanly presented and well sited.

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

Although you say there are no housing developments in your area, we consider any residential properties under this category heading. Your standard in this regard is very good.

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

We understand that it is difficult to maintain roadside verges due to the narrowness of the roads in places. Perhaps your local area engineer might be able to help you or occasionally. You remove weeds along the footpath verges. This was seen to be the case on adjudication day. But we again refer you to our comments under Wildlife etc.

Well done on the painting of the Street/village signs

We did not observe any speed limit sign on our approach road which was from the South West.

The Coolmeen approach is leafy and very beautiful.