

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ennis** Ref: **68**
County: **Clare** Mark: **314**
Category: **H** Date(s): **14/06/2014**
28/07/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	34
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36
TOTAL MARK	450	314

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Ennis - Welcome Ennis to the SuperValu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Firstly we would like to congratulate you on achieving a Gold Medal in the 2013 Competition! You are a large centre and deal with many challenges. You mention monthly meetings commencing in January. You tell us about your clean-ups from April until September. However, you do not mention anything about meetings from September until January. It is important that the momentum generated after the national competition winners have been announced in September is harnessed. Perhaps you do have meetings during this period as you have your local Awards event in November. You mention that members of Ennis Town Council volunteer their time to help you out. As the Town Council is now part of the local authority generally we hope that this co-operation continues. We see that you have already made arrangements to cooperate with the County Council in the running of two seminars.

The cooperation of many agencies, bodies, and businesses are important to your work. You mention six main bodies specifically under the question in relation to this aspect of Community Involvement and Planning. Twelve community groups and 37 residents groups helped you with your Spring Clean. Full marks to the Gardai, the Civil Defence, to the sports organisations, Lions Club, and staff members from MacDonald's for helping you with the same clean-up! We note that you connect with groups such as the Mens' (and Women's') Sheds. You acknowledge the facilities provided to you by Ennis Chamber of Commerce. You acknowledge the help of the local schools, Comhaltas, and the local media – print and radio. You also have rapport with members of your community who have specific interests. This is of great benefit to you.

We hope that you include minority church parish newsletters in your circulation agenda. You use modern and traditional methods of communication. You have both a website presence and Facebook presence. Your communication with all the many residents' associations is commendable.

You relate to your schools through Education Liaison Officers and intra-school projects. We are glad to see that you have Junior Tidy Towns members. Good luck with your plans to involve transition year students. Your school essay competition was launched, but not concluded before the end of the 2013/2014 adjudication year. We note this from following your Facebook page since adjudication day. We refer to the children's' work on the Tulla Road under the Tidiness section.

We are happy to know that there is a resultant 'feel good' factor for residents and visitors alike in relation to entering the Tidy Towns competition. Congratulations on your many achievements. We salute you for obtaining the Purple Flag designation.

Whereas the adjudicator admired the artistry involved in the town map, it was found to be far less useful for practical purposes in identifying projects, landmarks, street names, most approach roads etc. It is absolutely critical that you submit a map which is detailed enough to assist the adjudicator on adjudication day, and also to make cross-referencing easier for yourselves in your adjudication report. Ennis is a large town and requires a map of suitable clarity. The map did not differentiate between landmarks and projects completed during 2013 /2014. For instance none of the laneways which you specifically named in your Built Environment and Streetscape section as

having worked on, were identified individually - only their generic location was noted. Luckily the adjudicator had in their possession a town map picked up on an earlier visit to Ennis (supplied by Ennis Tourist Office) which was informative from a locational/directional point of view, and was somewhat helpful in orientating the adjudicator during the adjudicator's visit. Remember also that a map should extend to the town boundaries. We look forward to a much improved map in 2015.

Your hardcopy Entry Form refers throughout to your document 'Ennis Tidy Towns Community Caring for our Environment' - which report is in fact an expanded version of the Entry Form, but also contains your future plans under each category heading list. The lists of projects undertaken in this adjudication year 2013/2014 in the hardcopy Entry Form (or indeed in any downloaded expanded version thereof) should not contain your future projects. Such future projects should be contained in a separate document as a Tidy Towns Plan. Having all your plans - which lack a timescale - contained in what is akin to an expanded downloaded Entry Form i.e. 'Ennis Tidy Towns Community Caring for our Environment' is quite confusing. Please submit a hardcopy Entry Form or an expanded downloaded Entry form in 2015 which only lists projects which have been completed for the 2014/2015 adjudication year. You are cross-referencing from the hardcopy Entry Form to the expanded submission 'Ennis Tidy Towns Community Caring for our Environment' by referring constantly throughout the hardcopy Entry Form to various page numbers. We understand that because you are a big centre you may wish to adopt the expanded downloaded Entry Form format rather than the hardcopy. If you are using the expanded version we would also respectfully suggest that you do not add additional materials such as photographs etc. to the expanded Entry Form, but attach them as an Appendix which can be referenced throughout the expanded downloaded Entry Form.

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

Ennis has a very good built environment - with winding streets and vernacular buildings. It is remarkable how Ennis has retained its individuality with regard to business ownerships, and one is unlikely to see the typical high street names in prominent locations. The Main Streets such as O'Connell Street and Abbey Street and their associated laneways and squares provide a wonderful canvas and are assets to build upon. The individuality of business premises is highly visually engaging with changing roof levels and individual attributes. However the adjudicator sees a great need for a very focused new look at upgrading the built environment of the centre of Ennis. A strong recommendation would be that professional help would be sought to improve the town centre's presentation. From the following comments you will see why this is considered necessary.

You say that Ennis is a bustling market town - and this to a certain extent is true. The bustling consists of many movements and sounds, but, in the view of this adjudicator an inordinate percentage of the bustling is formed by traffic movement and traffic noise. The main thoroughfares have a continuous traffic flow along their length, which is quite distracting in forming a proper appreciation of the town. There are oases of peace to be had in off-street squares and laneways, and in the somewhat limited pedestrianised area. One such oasis is Market Place. This area is delightful and its properties are very well cared for.

Under this category heading you have listed projects which you have undertaken this year 2013/2014, but you have also listed projects of which there is no evidence of work to date. We will deal with the four projects which you tell us have been completed for this year's adjudication.

Pedestrian and cycle bridge at Ennis railway and bus station

The pedestrian and cycle bridge at the station has been completed. You acknowledge the cooperation of Iarnród Éireann and the Railway Safety Commission. This is a further development of the Smarter Travel Initiative throughout the town. This is a good addition to the town.

Multiuse games facility in Fairgreen

This is an aspect of a landscaped open space rather than an aspect of the built environment, and we consider it under the heading Landscaping and Open spaces.

Lane ways

The adjudicator was particularly disappointed in the condition of the three laneways which you say have been upgraded. The laneways which you mention are Brewery Lane, Friary Bow and Post Office Lane.

Brewery Lane is an important pedestrian connection between the riverside parking area and Abbey Street. It did not show any major signs of renewal. Paintwork on a grey wall by a series of steps was in need of repainting. Generally the buildings on that side of the lane were dull in their presentation with stained frontages in places. Clutter such as projecting lighting and air conditioning units were evident. The edges of the paving were grimy, and there was a small amount of graffiti over a post box on one of the properties.

The entrance to Friary Bow was festooned with gaudy advertising. This competes with the blue lane name-sign which is dwarfed by the advertising. Very stained paintwork requires upgrading in this laneway. And a certain amount of litter was noted here also. We did not see any evidence of your recent work in this lane. The only uplifting aspect was the pink-painted café. The 'police box' mural had a small accumulation of paper litter in front of it, and the ground here needed sweeping. An empty notice board had graffiti.

Post Office Lane has graffiti and is extremely grey and dull.

Signage

Your town entry signage proposal has not been completed for this year. The 'Heart of Ennis' large sign on the Tulla approach did not look to the adjudicator as if it had been put in place this year, but perhaps we are wrong about this. We look forward to the future project of new signage on the approach roads, and we would appeal to you to include all necessary official signage in a single design/location, using easily read symbols rather than wordy displays - which can distract the motorist. It may even be possible to provide a lay-bye area for safe reading of signage.

You list several other projects under this category heading in your Entry Form which are in various planning stages such as the Mill Wheel project. We acknowledge that work has commenced on some of these projects on paper but not on-the-ground.

Well done on the launch of the Smartphone App relating to the Heritage Trail. This brings the built environment's importance home to both locals and visitors. The adjudicator noted heritage notice boards in central locations and on the outskirts - such as the Ennis Union Workhouse sign. (Conservation work needs to take place on the stone

plinth/boundary wall of the Famine Memorial adjacent.) The confusion between both your documents is noticeable here - as in the hardcopy you do not mention this project which has been completed - but you detail its completion on page 13 of your larger document. The confusion between the two documents could lead to an adjudicator missing some elements which have been completed.

The St. Paul De Fenoiilet Square is a good focal area where many car visitors and local residents alike enter the main shopping area of the town. It is well presented with good banners, bicycle racks, landscaping, paving, information boards etc. For many this will form the first impression of the town of Ennis. We would desist from adding any more items to St. Paul De Fenoiilet Square. The sculpture, information boards, Tidy Towns pillar sign etc. are enough to occupy the space. There is a much less visually attractive laneway connecting St. Paul De Fenoiilet Square to O'Connell Street which is in need of upgrading. The laneway buildings contain many waste pipes, wires, and a door-less electricity meter. On adjudication day this section of laneway contained a little paper litter and cigarette butts. There was some orange graffiti on a wall of this laneway. The upper two floors (painted cream) of the grey and cream building facing ones exit from this laneway are in need of repainting. This particular building in need of repainting is on a strategic corner facing the O' Connell monument. In all, this first entry to the town needs some attention.

Many aspects of The Square where the O' Connell monument is located - are in need of attention. A payphone had two posters attached and the remains of several posters on its glazing. It looked as if the posters/notices had been torn off, but not carefully removed. There was a small piece of graffiti on the base of the O' Connell monument itself. The monument is in need of cleaning, and this should be carried out to best conservation practice and not by power washing. A large black white and red advertising hoarding detracted from views within The Square. On adjudication day a very large lorry and a large van - as well as a street trader's van were parked within The Square causing visual interference. There was also a constant relentless flow of traffic converging on The Square. On a traffic island a bicycle was 'locked' onto a tree trunk. An advertising sandwich board was located on the same island. Chemical weeding / killing appears to have been used at the base of the tree on the island, and the small amount of dead grass resultant had not been removed. This island has two good sculptural pieces and a large flower planter - but the good impact of these was lessened by the other issues. A (blue) three-storey premises had three external signs attached to its front elevation. All this created visual clutter. In the midst of this visual confusion one might well miss the lovely stone insertion of 'Well/ Tobair' on the footpath.

A huge hoarding on a white/grey gable facing the O' Connell monument had an elongated external projecting light attached. This gable also had a large 'to let' sign attached, together with a dirty street name in blue and white (which had nice old Irish lettering). This street sign name has obviously been replaced with the more modern street name, at a slightly lower level and of similar colouring, but with English naming taking precedence. It is a pity that the older sign had not been restored. It should be restored or else removed. This gable also had an 'alcohol free' worn sign, together with a defibrillator, Old Courthouse plaque, and a memorial. The unnecessary signage should be removed from this gable, and items such as the three last mentioned retained. Across the street on the corner of The Square a green building at ground floor level (with upper floors in red brick and cream paint) had a large and strident 'sold' sign attached, had an empty hanging basket bracket, and a deteriorated street name sign on one elevation at first-floor level. There was also a sandwich board advertising lunch on the footpath in front of this building. There were a number of instances of empty hanging baskets/ brackets throughout the town. We do not have any problem with their careful removal (to avoid damage to the fabric of the building) under the guidance of the County Architectural Conservation Officer where a protected structure or an area of architectural conservation (ACA) is concerned. In fact we would suggest that you concentrate on presenting the built environment without distraction or clutter.

We noticed a security shutter 'down' on one closed premises on a street near The Square (Saturday afternoon). We also noticed a shuttered shop front window in one of the laneways. Shop window security shutters create a 'fortress' like effect even at night. We suggest that internal shutters i.e. at the back of window displays should be the shutter of choice, and applied only where absolutely necessary. This provides for security, but also allows light to emanate from the shop fronts at night giving 'life' to the streets.

At this central location a laneway very close to The Square (off Parnell Street) had a lot of advertising on inclined walls and needed cleaning of both pavement and stained wall and wall bases. The laneway was also being used for storage of bins. A number of external lights, wirescape, a very large television aerial, and semi-erased graffiti, some litter, and green mould on the paving added to the poor visual quality of this central laneway, as seen from Parnell Street.

In general all the main streets had many projecting lights over name signs. Such lighting is not sympathetic to the vernacular streetscapes. Lighting, where possible, should be discreet and recessed. Additional clutter was noted in the form of projecting signs (some with neon), wirescape, satellite dishes, projecting flags, sandwich boards on footpaths, and neglected bunting. In many shop windows there were far too many notices appended to the glazing - which look untidy and create further clutter in the streetscape. Lower Market Street had a 'rash' of on-footpath sandwich boards, and, on adjudication day - a Saturday - also had some recycling bags out for collection - perhaps Saturday is a collection day.

This adjudicator was surprised to find that many of the laneways off the main streets were neglected, untidy, and dirty. The vast majority of the dilapidated laneways appear to be used as areas in which to store unscreened refuse bins and beer barrels, and they have much external cabling, transformers, satellite dishes etc. on the walls. One laneway had a serious occurrence of graffiti - on a red wall facing an ochre wall, although this laneway had a nice stone arch. Many of the town's lanes are, in general, badly in need of cleaning and painting. These lanes have great potential as areas for renewal. In the meanwhile a painting and the transfer of some of the hanging baskets from the main streets will brighten these alleyways. Some policy in relation to bin and barrel storage needs to be worked out. The adjudicator very much admired the stone naming of each of these lanes on the surface of the main streets. This is a lovely feature. Some good features like the stone plaque on Chapel Lane (describing the genesis of the laneway) are surrounded by clutter such as - in this case - some defunct wooden appendages to the wall, further external wirescape, and electric cabling. Chapel Lane itself looked well. It seems that the laneways which are

connecting laneways have been prioritised. The laneway in which a bookshop was located was very well presented - apart from one premises which had a shuttered doorway and a number of notices in its window detracting from its appearance. A short laneway in the Markets area containing a small mural is in need of an upgrade. Quin's Bow laneway, off Abbey Street, is an example of a poorly presented laneway. We admired the Jacobean chimney stack historic circular plaque and the adjacent James Barrett plaque, but drainpipes directly adjacent detract. Another example of where a good historic plaque is cluttered by adjacent items is that for the jostle stone in a laneway head abutting O'Connell Street..

A number of town centre premises were vacant. 'Left-behind' things like faded/tilting out-of-date notices, together with items like falling or dirty curtains, detracted from the general presentation of the streets. It is a sad fact that, due to the recession, rents have become unmanageable in central areas for many businesses. So it is understandable that businesses move. However what is left behind needs monitoring. In one case we noticed that several notices had been stuck to a closed shop front window and were removed, but the corners of all these notices had been left behind. In another case a large diagonal cross was scrawled on the shop front window. Some of the abandoned premises have deteriorating paintwork.

A lot of banner signage was attached to the St. Francis's Credit Union building. Conversely in O'Connell Street, The Ennis Cash Company building is a classic example of good vernacular Irish streetscape architecture which has not been cluttered, and has been well maintained. Its good timber sash windows, simple shop front, and lack of added clutter makes it stand out. In Abbey Street the Ennis bookshop has good hood moulding, which has been nicely picked out with contrasting paint colour. Alexander Knox and Company is a beautiful shop front. We would like to see the external lighting replaced by something more in keeping, and some of the window/grille notices removed. The lettering on A. Honan was admired. Cashin and Associates Solicitors near the Friary is another example of a simple classical 'shop front' at ground floor level. The Volo premises/bar is well presented with good landscaping. The terrace of older houses beyond Volo is a reminder of how architectural simplicity, good conservation, and maintenance can catch the eye. The Cloisters restaurant is an example of how 'less is more' in its classical simplicity. The hostel across the bridge/river has an excellent elevational presentation to the river, and has resisted the temptation to advertise or 'complicate' its presence. A good terrace of houses with varying heights from two to three-storey was noted along Harmony Row. A new terrace of buildings on Carmody Street - which included Doherty solicitors and Halpin accountants is a good example of how a modern infill development can be assimilated successfully, respecting existing streetscape character. Collins jeweller's was very well presented. F. Considine's is a well-painted premises, but has too many projecting items - including a redundant sign holder. Madden Furniture on Station Road is an example of a simple modern building without unnecessary attachments. A modern curved building at the entrance to The Hawthorns/Banner Court/Bramble Lane on the Clareabbey approach was admired. However, a large advertising sign detracts somewhat from the building.

Bindon Street is certainly one of the 'jewels in the crown' of the built environment of Ennis. We commend those owners who have retained the sash windows of these Georgian terraces. It is important that the remaining sash windows be conserved, so as the area does not lose its integral character. We particularly admired the bright yellow doors on three adjoining properties here. The brick surrounded fanlight on the Malony office looked very well. The Munster Stone Group building on Bindon Street forms a nice contrast to the Georgian terraces. The red brick terrace along Bank Place looked well. We would suggest that the owners/occupiers of the end property desist from attaching banners to the associated railings. Eason, AIB, and Carraig Dun buildings are all fine examples of significant Ennis architecture.

Public buildings such as the Courthouse, Catholic Cathedral, the Church of Ireland and the Library are well presented. The white railings at the side of the Catholic Cathedral on the Station Road boundary would benefit from a repaint before next year. A red gable facing the side elevation of the Cathedral does not do justice to the precincts of the Cathedral - due to the number of traffic and advertising signs attached and free standing signs adjacent - together with a rubbish bin adjacent. Conversely the stone front elevation of this building looks well. The section of O'Connell Street between the Cathedral and Carmody Street/Clare Road looked very well and uncluttered. The empty plant holders outside the Courthouse do nothing to enhance its setting and should be removed. The Courthouse gates and railings require attention.

The Library set amongst trees in a quiet area of the town was admired. Ennis Health Centre needs to have its front boundary walls and wall capping painted before 2015. If a repaint could extend to the entire building this would also be beneficial. The reuse of the County Library building - a two storey stone-faced property with its very discreet signage is something highly commendable. This is an example of how information can be displayed in a tasteful fashion. The Bank of Ireland on Bank Place is in itself a fine building, but its architectural integrity is compromised by the number of attached signs both externally and internally in the windows. We admired the intricacy of the stone carving on its doorway. The beautiful old sign for Bank Place with its lovely Irish script looked decrepit. The Post Office's front elevation looked well with its three neat post boxes. County Clare Vocational Education Committee building on Friars' Walk was clean and bright. The offices of Teagasc on Station Road looked well.

The Fairways disused property has a 'sale agreed' sign. We note from your report that the property will be redeveloped over the next 12 to 18 months. The hostel on Carmody Street which is for sale would benefit from a repaint before 2015. We hope that it will find agreeable new owners, as the building and its wall plants look quite well. The Clare People building on the opposite side of the street needs attention to its paintwork. It is a good three-storey building retaining its sash windows. We admired the tall beautifully designed railings fronting the apartment development at the 'Maid of Erin'/ bridge end of Cornmarket Street. However across the road a number of older derelict and dirty modern properties detracted from this end of the street.

A derelict property, opposite the pedestrian crossing adjacent to the playground looked poorly.

The Garda Station is a very fine building and is well presented. The iron gates at the entrance would benefit from conservation. We noted that construction work was going on at the back of the Garda Station (visible on the road to the Courthouse).

At the Clare Language Centre the railings need painting, and the gates are rusty. An inferior sign board detracts from its frontage. Otherwise this is a very fine building.

Holy Family Junior and Senior schools are landscaped nicely, but what caught the eye were the unusual and well maintained railings along the school boundary. We noted the Green Flag flying proudly here. The adjudicator would like to commend the town of Ennis on the amount of Irish used in the town centre and in naming new housing estates. We note your plans with regard to use of the Irish language for 2014. Well done on the use of Irish for instance at the Museum, Bank Uladh, the inscription on the 'Giota den Shean Teach Cúirte na hInse' plaque in The Square, and the naming in Irish of each of the laneways on the floor of the pedestrianised streets. Brohan's 'Siopa Crua Earraí' sign was admired, although the display of goods on the pedestrianised street would be awkward for people with mobility issues. 'An Binsin Luachra' and the Bacús shop on O'Connell Street were admired also. Ciarán's Bar with 'Ceol agus Craic' writing is another example of the use of Irish. We particularly liked the 'Codladh Samh' sign in the hostel window beside the Club bridge. We loved the Oifig an Phoist sign on the brick post office.

We note your ongoing work in relation to derelict sites and also your work with the Ennis Chamber of Commerce and the (now disbanded) Town Council in relation to vacant properties, and we acknowledge your work on improving the appearance of vacant properties.

An 'Art for All' exhibition in the open air took place since your last adjudication - such use of the external built environment as a setting for artistic endeavour is to be encouraged and commended.

Under this category heading you refer to sustainable Green Travel electrical points. These are considered under Sustainable Waste and Resource Management and not here under Built Environment and Streetscapes.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Landscaping in Ennis is of very good quality in all its manifestations. Under this category heading you mention six projects in all. It appears that most of these projects are still in the planning stage for various reasons - apart from a single refurbished sign at the Ballyallia Lake. The Tim Smyth Park facility is a wonderful amenity for residents and visitors alike. The park is maintained in impeccable condition, and is very accessible to the town centre. It benefits from its nice surrounds including the Courthouse, Steele's Terrace etc. The gates to the playground are a little rusty, but otherwise this is a user-friendly piece of landscaping with its paths and children's playground. The Multiuse games area included by you under Built Environment is a great amenity/facility. We were delighted to hear that 100 trees were supplied free to local community groups and residents associations during National Tree Week. We realise the loss of tree cover which you suffered during the February storms.

We would suggest that you begin to concentrate on more sustainable planting schemes involving planting in the soil where possible. There are areas that benefit hugely from potted floral displays - such as dull lane ways and neglected areas. However this adjudicator considers that within the town centre more emphasis should be placed on presenting the built environment without distraction. This need not preclude native tree /shrub planting, and appropriate, but limited, flower displays. In particular, structures which are protected structures should not have hanging baskets attached. This includes bridges as well as buildings, because the attachments can damage the fabric of the buildings. The flower beds and floral displays in the more suburban areas and in formal park areas within Ennis are excellent. Well done to the Brothers of Charity colleagues who work well with you on the propagation of flowers. Congratulations on your success in your application for funding under the Public Area Enhancement scheme and we note you are going to use this funding at the Lakeside area.

The area around Glór is beautifully landscaped, and has matured extremely well over the years. We admired the stone bollards along the green spaces in this area. However, we did notice a few dead trees along the road between Glór and Francis Street and a small section of timber fencing needed repair. A café sign also needed upgrading amongst the treed edges. Tree planting in Lower Market Street was much admired, but its effect was lessened by a multitude of signboards on the footpath. We admired the good semi-mature trees outside the GAA grounds. The landscaping at Aldi was good and the railings and stone walls here also add to the overall effect. The NRA depot on the Tulla approach is nicely landscaped, which helps 'absorb' the green security railings visually. Well done to the Mayor for choosing Kincora Park for a landscaping project. This will have good amenity and educational effect. The Kincora Park sculpture and adjacent flower beds were admired. The shrub bed in front of the modern curved building at the entrance to The Hawthorns/Banner Court on the Clareabbey approach was admired. The hard landscaped area across from Ennis Abbey commemorating 1916 to 1966 was also admired. The small park beside the library is extremely well presented and maintained. The curtilage of the Courthouse and the nearby grotto area looked well. Landscaping on Bank Place and in particular the trees, together with the sculpture at the junction of Bindon Street and Bank Place can be admired in their peaceful setting. The lovely marigold displays in the stone bed near the Mill wheel look bright and cheerful. The Riverside Park between the Mill Bridge and the town centre's Woodquay is a lovely amenity and its landscaping is a delight. Some graffiti detracts from the overall park - as explained under the Tidiness and Litter category. The flower bed outside the Clare Champion offices was admired.

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

Under this category heading you discuss a planned website awareness raising campaign, planned invasive species training and the commencement of a three-year biodiversity plan. As already explained such detail should be included in your Tidy Towns Plan separate document, and should not form part of your 'projects completed' list. We look forward to seeing these projects take off on-the-ground. We also note that you are working in partnership with Clare County Council to run a seminar on wildlife and biodiversity. This will, we hope, also be a 2014/2015 project. We read on your Facebook page (since adjudication day) that the bug hotel at St Anne's School was your wildlife and biodiversity award winner. Well done to the students! This project appears to have commenced in late April; the closing date was 12th June, and the winner was only recently announced on your Facebook page) so it really is a project to be considered by next year's adjudicator. Do remember to include it in next year's Entry Form. The enhancing biodiversity aspect of the Garden Challenge/Garden Festival is noted.

No doubt you have already consulted with - and will continue to liaise with the County Heritage Office and County Biodiversity Officer who will give you advice and encouragement on all aspects of wildlife and natural amenities.

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 the schools on even elementary nature study surveys can lead in time to further analysis and interpretation/presentation of findings. It is important and impressive that you are aware of the designated sites in your locality.

Evidence of chemical weed killing was noticed around the base of some trees in the town such as at The Square and near the e-car parking space at the riverside, and in the area of Glór. We would encourage you to engage with non chemical weed management.

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

We are impressed with your Sustainable Living Pack idea which you have piloted in on An tSeán Dún estate, and plan to expand to other residential estates. We are also glad to see that you are carrying out a pilot study/audit in relation to same. You have the assistance of the local authority in this. Well done to the three retail businesses who have participated in a project to reduce the amount of waste they generate, as well as reducing water and energy usage. Once again an audit is the best way to keep track of progress and also to propose management from outcomes. It is a little unclear as to the timescale involved in this project.

There have been relevant activities taking place over the last 12 months in four different primary schools under the Green Schools' Travel Programme. Well done also to the ongoing energy reduction and water conservation at the Ennis Leisure Centre. We noted your eco-are parking spaces on the ground.

We note that you are working in partnership with Clare County Council to run a seminar on waste minimisation. You have already held an upcycling/recycling event at the local authority offices. You have also involved sustainable waste and resource management as a topic at the Clare Garden Festival in relation to composting, waste reduction, reuse, and water conservation. You referred to the Ennis water main rehabilitation scheme under the Built Environment and Streetscape heading and its effect on replacing the leaking water pipes. However, its effect will be more on the sustainable waste and resource management category. This is also planned rather than actually happening at present.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Under this category heading you mention your new approach-road signs which have yet to be put in place. The signs are dealt with under the Approach Roads Streets and Lanes category. Likewise your phone booths project is only at its initial stage.

Despite the fact that you are implementing the existing fly-post rules, the adjudicator found a number of fly posting situations as follows:

On Clon Mór Road fly posting was noted on both sides of the road. Fly posting re-Irish dancing was noted near the Club Bridge/Harmony Row. Some fly posting was noted in the vicinity of Roslevan, on the Tulla Road approach. Some fly posting was observed on the Drumbiggie Rd. near the Golf Club Road.

As discussed under Built Environment and Streetscapes your painting of the 3 chosen laneways appears to be behind schedule. Issues in relation to the lack of tidiness in these lanes have been detailed under the Built Environment and Streetscapes heading.

The sign at Pairc Chiosóg Inis needs repainting. However the Irish script was admired. The barbed wire on top of the walls here looks ugly. And the blue gates and the remainder of the blue paintwork are in need of repainting. We noted a broken gate pier and some rusty square bollards adjacent. The black and yellow bollards outside the parking g area here also need to be straightened.

The bottle bank on Francis Street was tidy. However, it would appear that inadequate parking encourages parking on the opposite side of the road with consequent pedestrian road crossing to the bottle banks. This does not seem to be a very satisfactory situation. Some staining on the wall near the bottle banks could be washed/ repainted.

The flower bed outside the Clare Champion was admired but its sign needs renewal. The sign 'peas carrots cheese white wine' painted on a wall in a vertical manner as one approaches O'Connell Street from the Markets area (where one might park) is very poor.

Empty flagpoles detracted somewhat from the Ennis Civic Trust wall plaque near the Mill wheel. The Woodquay end of the River walk is poorly presented, and the damaged tilting corrugated sheeting, dirty walls, and empty notice board are out of place here. The large colourful mural does little to disguise these. At Woodquay - what appears to be a rusting wheelbarrow - was noticed in the river. A laneway joining Woodquay to Parnell Street/High-street. was particularly dirty and uninviting. A large sign/hoarding, partly submerged, floated in the river parallel with Newbridge Road. This was visible from the Club Bridge.

At the Spar shop near the playground there were a lot of advertising signs on the footpath. These look somewhat untidy, and can also cause obstruction to footpath users particularly to people with buggies or specific mobility needs.

The adjudicator was quite disappointed to see a badly-damaged neglected rusty disused Victorian post box in the Bindon Street vicinity. Such post-boxes are historical items, and are usually on the list of protected structures. A well painted GR post box had a yellowing sign attached. Near the Friary a post box had some leftover scraps of notices on its surface. A circular post box and small green substation just outside Ennis Abbey entrance badly need a repaint. To attend to this is more important than placing or watering the planter nearby.

A large gable mural - predominantly royal blue in colour - in the vicinity of the Library needs upgrading. A nice terrace of houses along Harmony Row would benefit from the painting of the plinth along the wall bases. Just beyond this terrace a derelict wall/windows is a feature needing your attention. The entrance to St Anne's school here is in need of an upgrade. Towards the bridge end of Cornmarket Street there are a number of derelict sheds. At one end of a terrace on Bindon Street an entrance was cluttered by signage and also had a notice attached to the front door. This is not in character with the presentation of the street. The railings outside the post office on Bank Place are in serious need of renewal, as is the 'no parking' sign on the same railings. The green lichen/mould along the window cills of this building need cleaning.

An old 'Tierney' shop needs attention. The new shop looked well.

Wirescape between Market Street and O'Connell Street would benefit from rationalisation when funds allow.

On the Ennistymon approach near Bushy Park House, we observed that 'clean up after your dog' awareness exists in Ennis, as we noted a resident carefully scooping on behalf of her golden labrador at the entrance to Inisgrove estate! If you recognise yourself take a bow!

The occupants of the e car park space by the riverside will be treated to a view of several bins and a sandwich board. This seems a pity given the lovely location of the space.

The gable/side elevation of the Queens is in need of attention as seen as one approaches the Cathedral from the O'Connell monument.

Towards the bridge end of Cornmarket Street grey recessed entrance splay walls and gates need an upgrade

A plethora of advertising directional signage on a gable to a laneway off O'Connell Street drew attention to 3 dirty blue red and yellow small substations in the same lane. In the same general vicinity a very under par Telecom booth was noticed. In the square at the back of the museum the parking area centrepiece was an island full of recycling bins. We would also draw attention to the fact that the rear elevation of the Museum is less well-kept than that facing The Square.

Generally the town and surrounds were weed-free apart from some approach road weeds (See Roads etc. category). This is quite an achievement over such a large area. Some weeds were in evidence along Station Road around bollards and parking signs.

A blue derelict property at the junction of Station Road and Clon Mór Road has a very dirty boundary wall on a significant junction. Other poor boundary walls along this road require repainting also. The field at the junction to the railway station (in which the railway and bus name signs are located) is very overgrown and the sign itself is unattractive. Sweeping is required along the concrete base of adjacent new railings. The gravel in an adjacent landscaped area was somewhat weedy, although the raised flower bed looked well. A rusty remaining piece of old railing and surrounding weeds on the abutment of the bridge (town and station side of bridge/road) should be removed.

Graffiti occurrences - few of which were extensive - but recurrent - included the following:

There was graffiti on one of the sculptures at the Millwheel hard landscaped area.

Further blue graffiti was noted on the Ennis River walk plaque along the side of the footpath leading back into the town - as well as on a litter bin close by. At the Woodquay end of the River Walk, a huge amount of graffiti took over on a container wall, and there was a small amount of red graffiti on the adjacent apartments building. Graffiti was noted on the laneway joining Woodquay to Parnell Street/High Street. Graffiti was noted in O'Connell Street on the projecting vertical wall of a shop front as one moved from The Square towards the Cathedral. A small amount of graffiti was noted on a small substation in O'Connell St. Graffiti was spotted on a new metal box on a metal pole near the new road entrance to Bindon Street car park. On Bindon Street /end of a terrace we noted graffiti on an empty notice board which was attached to railings. There was some graffiti on a pole opposite the Cathedral on Station Road. A small amount of graffiti was noted around the corner from Nolan Lambe's in Market Square. There was a small amount of graffiti over a post box on one of the properties in a laneway. One laneway (already discussed under Built Environment) had a serious occurrence of graffiti - on a red wall facing an ochre wall. In another lane an empty notice board contained graffiti, and Post Office Lane had graffiti. There was orange graffiti on a wall of a laneway off Parnell/High St, near The Square.

Despite your regular cleanup evenings, your 'Adopt a Road Scheme, your Spring Clean, the adjudicator found that Ennis has a litter problem. Although this is not major issue, it is an issue, and we can substantiate this adjudication observation with photographs. We appreciate how difficult it is to monitor the situation on a daily basis throughout such a large area, but we would strongly recommend that you consider how best to approach this issue before 2015. Your gum litter task force was launched and involved school visits during 2014. However, as the launch was only happening after the end of this year's Tidy Towns adjudication year, progress under this category for this project will be adjudicated in 2015.

The following were instances of littering:

The adjudicator was disappointed by the amount of litter found floating in the water at the Mill Road Bridge end of the Riverside Park. This included tin cans, plastic bottles etc. And it was not confined to one location - a particularly bad occurrence was noted in the water beside the old Mill wheel as well. This was certainly the worst evidence of littering seen in Ennis. A small amount of litter lay beside a black litter bin at Woodquay riverside.

In the vicinity of the playground we noted a fair scattering of litter,

A bad outbreak of littering noted was just inside the railings of the convent on Friars Walk. A series of bottles had been thrown in to the hedging here at intervals and were visible from the footpath.

Some litter was noted along the lovely new pedestrian bridge over the railway. Further litter was noted along the red brick wall which encloses the gravelled landscaped area near the adjacent housing estate.

There was a small scattering of litter on Station Road close to the entrance to the hotel.

Some litter was noted at the Ballyallia junction (lake). A lot of litter was noted around one of the litter bins at Ballyallia Lake including bottles thrown amongst the trees. Further plastic bottles were observed on a windowsill in O'Connell Street, beside the bring banks on Francis Street and thrown in the entrance of St. Anne's School; another was thrown beside a car on Station Road.

A small amount of paper litter was noted at intervals along O'Connell Street. Items such as an empty can were noted on an electricity substation in one of the laneways. A small amount of litter was noted in the laneway with a

very bright terracotta coloured building with a small mural. Friary Bow Lane had some litter.

The unnamed estate off the Tulla West roundabout was very littered, especially in the enclosure just inside the entrance barrier.

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

One of the great strengths of Ennis Tidy Towns is the excellence of its residential properties – whether this is in the town itself or in the many housing estates throughout the town and its suburbs. We acknowledge the commitment of residents associations in their cooperation with your own work. We are very impressed with the number of associations whose goodwill you can harness and whose efforts you reward with your competitions. Obviously it is impossible to visit each and every estate, but the adjudicator was so impressed that the adjudicator visited as many as possible!

The winning estate in the Green Areas competition 2013 was An tSean Dún. This estate is beautifully maintained with carefully cut grass and a wildflower area. On adjudication day it appeared that the wildflowers consisted mainly of ox eye daisies. Perhaps you can let us know what other species have been planted. The heritage trail sign at the entrance to this estate is an enterprising idea.

Steeles Terrace, opposite the Courthouse, is an excellent terrace, and is very well presented by all its residents. The tree planting along the footpath here is very effective. The stone wall along Green Park/New Road combines to make this an excellent residential streetscape. We look forward to the publication of the book about this part of the town of Ennis.

It is nice to see that you have an awareness of the difficulty older people can have when it comes to keeping boundary walls painted on a busy road. The Green Areas competition is an excellent initiative, which has been ongoing for the last few years. We wish you luck with the review of the adjudication criteria.

Westfields estate at the Town Centre roundabout has a very nice Fáilte sign. We admired the red blooms. This is an impeccable leafy estate, and early on a quiet Saturday morning the only action was the arrival of a lawn mower. It is obvious that the residents put keeping their estate resplendent ahead of a sleep-in! It was hardly surprising to find that this estate won the Ennis Tidy Towns Green Area Award in 2011, 2007 and 2001.

An undeveloped site detracts from the entrance to The Hawthorns/Banner Court/Bramble Lane estates, which themselves are very well presented. Here we admired the excellent use of existing peripheral boundary hedging, together with lovely trees and shrubs. It is evident that this estate is much-loved - and even the car parking was meticulously neat and ordered! There is good copper beech tree planting fronting Bramble Court's front elevation to the main road.

Cúirt na Mainistreach is a leafy clean estate.

The unnamed estate off the Tulla West roundabout was very littered, especially in the enclosure just inside the entrance barrier. Pallets were stored on green space.

The entrance to Hillcrest had a lot of nettles growing on one side and this looked quite unkempt. This was all the more noticeable as this location is close to where your Tidy Towns Gold Medal (undated) sign is located.

We admired the stone sign and Irish script at Rathbán estate, and also the delightfully named Gort na mBláth /Field of the Flowers. The fingerpost sign was noted. Lios Árd and Gort na Bláth both have clean footpaths generally.

The sign at the Four Seasons Estate was dirty. This estate otherwise is fairly typical of estates around the town - a lot of leafy roads with quite mature landscaping, together with well-trimmed open spaces.

Is the Gort Leamhán housing hoarding still necessary for marketing purposes? It is rather intrusive because of its size.

We admired the trees at Roslevan. We noted new trees in this area - some of which were not doing so well. The adjacent ESB station needs painting.

St. Senan's Road and The Crescent are leafy residential areas.

At Acha Bhuile estate two large empty metal signs were noted.

Pairc na Coille retirement village looked well.

Cahercalla estate has a huge attractive open space fronting the road side on the Kilkee approach. The trees along this road frontage are well looked after as on adjudication evening we observed tree pruning. A nice flower bed at the traffic lights/junction was also admired.

A nameless estate opposite Clare Leisure World should have a name sign/directional sign. At the entrance to this estate a 'headless' road sign (i.e. a traffic sign pole without a sign) was observed.

Clancy Park was very neat.

The boulder and shrub beds at the entrance to Ard Caoin estate on the Galway road are attractive.

Hedging at the entrance to Cottage Gardens looked very well (on the road to the station.)

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

On the approach from the Clareabbey roundabout there are some nice mature trees. A large 'headless' double-poled road sign was noted in the vicinity of the roundabout. This should either be removed or have its relevant sign reattached. On adjudication day the adjudicator noticed fly-posting on the approach past the roundabout. Some weeds were observed alongside the cream plywood fence (on top of a concrete wall) and at the entrance to this unfinished/disused commercial property. The upright pole of the 50 K pH speed limit sign was seen to be badly in need of paint or renewal. A few pieces of litter were noted along this approach. A lot of weeds were noted along a concrete block wall fronted by nice semi-mature trees approaching the Town Centre Roundabout/Road R 458. Some weeds were noted along the wall near the traffic lights sign, and an entrance in the vicinity has an old planning permission sign and is very weedy. In front of the Topaz garage we admired a good shrub bed. After turning towards the town centre the (high) sign for Quinn/Tulla was almost obscured by high hedging.

On the Tulla/Scariff approach trimming is required around the 50 K pH speed limit sign on the right-hand side, and

between this speed limit sign and the East Clare roundabout. We salute the private house owner whose house is just outside the roundabout on the Tulla side who was out mowing his long strip of roadside boundary on adjudication day. The East Clare roundabout itself appeared somewhat neglected. A weedy footpath edge on the left-hand side between the 50 speed limit sign and East Clare roundabout was noted. We also observed a leaning tilted STOP sign in this area. The Tulla West roundabout was presented in a better fashion than the East Clare roundabout although there was a 'headless' road sign on the Tulla West Roundabout. There were weedy edges on the bridge over the motorway. As one nears the town centre this approach is a typical suburban ribbonised approach with some well grassed banks and good mature trees. The Topaz station had nice shrub planting but also a lot of signage. Could the signage be rationalised? The good shrubbery in front of a house between Topaz and the lovely flower bed at the junction of road L4608 was noted. It was impossible to travel along the Gurteen approach road on adjudication day as there was a major traffic jam at the Tulla Road end. Thank you for your photographs of the childrens' art work hoarding "We love Ennis/ work in progress." We viewed this work on the Tulla approach road. The wide entrance gate and general views into the screened site still need further screening.

On the town side of this we admired very good shrubbery/trees on a raised bed. Some weedy footpaths were noted around Roslevan/roundabout. On a joinery site there was a lot of below-par advertising on a wooden fence and also a nameless estate opposite, as well as a building site opposite Cloverhill. The Tulla road petrol station canopy needs painting but good shrubs were observed fronting the petrol station. The single-storey units adjacent looked somewhat 'defensive' with their pull-down shutters.

On the Ennistymon Road we admired a very nice bridge which has not been 'ornamented' by hanging baskets - which leaves its conservation more intact. This particular approach to the town is very weed-free and has many low-density suburban type developments. Both garages on this approach are well presented. However a lot of signage on this approach road- for example for The Lions Club etc. - might be rationalised into one main sign. Opposite the Inisgrove estate there is a rather large car sales area with large concrete fixtures delineating property. This is not an attractive feature of the approach at this point. Inver petrol station had a lot of signage, and a fly-post was noted in the grassed area opposite. A dead tree was noted at Clareen roundabout. On a straight stretch of road some weeds were noted on the bridge over the Clareen river.

We admired the Ennis town green and white metal name sign on the Drumbiggle road approach. This is a classically simple flower - adorned sign. This approach is a narrow twisting approach with good stone walls. A site under development hopefully will be completed in the near future. The security railings at the entrance to Ennis RFC and to Páirc na Coille would benefit from additional planting. The road from Drumbiggle Road to Ennis Golf Club requires resurfacing. Some fly posting was noted at this point.

Some nice terraces of houses were admired on the Kilkee Road, including some good artisan cottages. Good tree planting has been carried out along this approach. A directional sign - as one exit Ennis towards Kilkee - was obscured by vegetation on adjudication day. An overgrown field opposite houses near Clare Leisure World - and in front of Clare Leisure World itself - looked poorly in this developed area. A 'headless' road sign also exists at the entrance road to Clare Leisure World.

The Kilrush Road roundabout was well trimmed. We would recommend that security railings at the Campus forecourt be planted. And perhaps some of the cars at this site might be reduced or screened. A shopping centre here looked well. The concrete blocks and security fencing in the area between Abbey Medical Centre and Mazda Cahercalla might be improved through planting. We also observed a dirty Kilkee/Kilrush sign at a blocked-off road area. This would appear to be redundant and should be removed.

We would recommend that you paint all field gates on all approach roads in a uniform colour.

A large amount of parking on the road outside St Joseph's Hospital detracted from this road and one wonders if on-site parking is not available or underused?

On the Galway approach there are some great mature trees, together with stone walls. We admired the newer trees also. The established housing estates with their mature entrances looked well. The wide peripheral planting and good grass banks add to the quality of this approach road. The Gort Road Business Park was well presented. Its stone wall frontage and tree planting (both inside and outside the stone wall boundary) looks very well. The footpaths along this approach are weed-free, and we admired the flower beds at the entrance to the Business Park and the various other entrances along this approach. The Educate Together School had a weedy fence and its gate needs painting. We noted its Green Flag. Cois na Habna had three flagpoles but no flags. One 'headless' road sign on the town side of the Business Park was noted. The Nissan Dulick premises was very well presented, and its white and red paint looked bright. Some fly posting was noted along this approach. At the Ballynahallia junction there were too many signs on the Ennis Supply Company and W TS site boundaries. Some rusty gates were also observed at this point. At the Ballymaley roundabout we noticed another 'headless' road sign

Under the Built Environment and Streetscape category you mention road works in various places as future projects. Firstly, these road works should be mentioned under this category heading, and as they are future project so we cannot credit marks here for them. We look forward to their implementation before the 2015 adjudication. Well done on the resurfacing works which you have had carried out, as well as the footpath improvements/signals upgrade/road lining works and improvements to pedestrian crossings. It would have been very useful if you had marked these individual improvements on your map. Under the same category heading in your booklet you also talk about traffic management, safety and pedestrian crossings. These proposals are at consultation stage and once again form part of your Tidy Towns Plan.

Under this category heading you return to the topic of painting and cleaning of lanes. We have already commented. Your future proposals in relation to the Active Travel Towns Scheme are listed in your document, but also in your list of projects in your Entry Form. Again the confusion between completed projects and planned projects is not helped by the dual function of the hardcopy Entry Form and the document 'Ennis Tidy Towns Community Caring for its Environment.' The revitalisation of the Ennis Market area and the electrical points connection to the Farmers' Market are also future projects.

Ennis is supplied with excellent car parking spaces between the public car park and the Dunne's Stores car park to the rear of the main streets as well as many other spaces, This also provides easy access to shopping, the

Museum, the Tourist Information Office etc. It is noteworthy that provision is made also for good bus parking. This is important as Ennis is a major tourist centre.

Some of the street lighting within the town centre needed washing. The quality of the stone footpaths within the town is commendable, but the stone bollards in places need cleaning - particularly of their bases. Parking on footpaths was observed on a busy Saturday afternoon in O'Connell Street. This is both dangerous for footpath users, and also injurious to the paving. Poor road surface in the Market Streets area was observed, as was the need for the straightening of some traffic bollards. In The Square road markings need renewal. An Ennis old Friary directional sign is surrounded by piping and wiring attached to a corner building face.

The entrance to Holy Family junior and senior schools was potholed.

A headless road sign was observed at the junction of Station Road and Clon Road Mor.

A road sign for Station Road (towards the railway station end of this road) was obscured by overhanging vegetation.

We noticed some cracked footpaths in the green area around Friars Walk and Clon Road Mor.

The 'Ennis our town mural' on the Tulla road approach is a work in progress and the considerable length of unpainted parts of the hoarding still looked poorly. The base is particularly dirty. On the Drumbiggle approach road the green hoarding which is painted with a saying 'Ennis is the place to be' is work in progress and needs to be completed before 2015

Along the perimeter of the Courthouse we noticed a double 'headless' road sign.

A large Pay-and-Display sign in the main car parking area near Temple Gate needs painting or replacement. A dirty Park and Display sign on the Abbey Church boundary detracts from what is a very well presented church and grounds.

Second Round Adjudication:

Ennis the capital of Clare is large and busy, colourful and appealing. It has an amount of through traffic and yet has succeeded where many similar towns have failed in relegating traffic volumes. This has allowed people once again to take precedence and the pedestrian to feel safe to enjoy the ever colourful streetscape, comprising many small and well presented shops. On the day of adjudication the streets and all approach roads were suitably well swept which gave an ideal - and largely accurate - fore taste of this most interesting town. The very successful presentation of your predestination areas is particularly praiseworthy. The perfusion of small black signs directing one to many of the in town attractions are welcome and helpful to your many visitors. The counter-sunk panels displaying the names of the various small lanes off Parnell Street were especially enjoyed. The sorry appearance of the river bed beside the River Walk and by the main car-park is a severe jolt which will take resolute action to improve. Many of the mature and graceful trees lining the approach roads were admired but somewhat disappointing to note the number where their lower trunks have been engulfed and disfigured by seemingly unrestrained sucker's growth. The large multi-lifesize hands at the church are most thought provoking. They join a sizeable array of fine public sculptures ranging from O Connell on his tall pillar to the two haggling farmers and the cow! Although often overworked the expression 'all human life is here' seems singularly apt for this town of Ennis.