

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ennistymon** Ref: **69**  
County: **Clare** Mark: **263**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/06/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	29
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>263</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Ennistymon. Welcome Ennistymon to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 10 members and approximately 25 volunteers. We are glad to hear that this number is growing. You meet monthly.

You communicate in various ways both traditional and modern. This is good. Modern methods are sustainable and appeal to the younger generation. We have been keeping an eye on your Facebook page even after our visit although quite obviously our adjudication is for the day that we visited you and we cannot postdate any subsequent improvements. They will stand to you for next year's adjudication. We hope that you circulate minority churches represented in your area as well as the main church. You are lucky to have TÚS and FÁS workers. You get help from various bodies, agencies and from the local business community. You have very good links with the local authority.

Your schools have helped you with various clean-ups and other projects. You list many projects being undertaken by schools at various levels in Ennistymon. This is a very good omen for the future of Tidy Towns in your village. (We use the term 'village' as you are entered in the village category – you correctly re categorised your level of entry when your population dropped below 1,000. Our natural inclination would be to refer to you as a town).

Interestingly you say that your spirit of volunteerism supports positive mental health. This is a very important statement because of the issues in relation to mental health that are commonplace in Ireland at the present time. You say that a sense of well-being is fostered in the town through the Tidy Towns movement. We are happy to hear this.

Thank you for your updated and extended Tidy Towns plan, and you thank you also for the photographs which you have submitted and other submissions including relevant newspaper inserts.

Your map was helpful to the adjudicator.

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

You are correct in saying that Ennistymon is one of a few towns which escaped major redevelopment during the Celtic Tiger period. However, it has not escaped the 'takeover' by traffic. This adjudicator does not think it is ever taken them so long to cross the street as it did in Ennistymon at Blakes corner. The entire impression of the centre of the village is one of 'traffic rules.' Every inch of footpath had cars parked at right angles, and there seems to be constant movement backwards and forwards. Is there any hope of pedestrianisation in any part of your village?

You list a number of business properties which have been improved this year and we commend you and the owners on this.

The Teach Ceol is an example of a historic building finding a new and appropriate use. It is a pity that fly posting of a fairly large size detracted from views to the church and its excellent enclosing walls from the Lisdoonvarna approach.

Some three auctioneering advertising signs detracted from a (now) restaurant property at the top of the hill near the Church of Ireland. Looking down the street from this elevated position the gable to the O' Brien brick-fronted property was badly in need of repainting. This is a strategic corner as it is at the entrance to the Main Street.

A green traditional shuttered shop front in the Main Street with good timber sash windows on upper levels was admired. It is hoped that this property will find a new use soon - although as the windows were open - perhaps the first and second floors are residential. The metal shuttered Credit Union building looked defensive. It is a pity that metal shutters have to be used. Is there any other security arrangement possible? Even if shutters have to be used perhaps they could be inserted at the back of the window.

In general we noted a lot of excessive projecting items on shop fronts such as lights, signage, wires, boxes and satellite dishes.

The O' nEagrain premises on Main Street is a good building, but in need of some upgrading.

Quite an amount of clutter was located externally on some business premises – such as at Spar on the Main Street. This is both obstructive to footpath users (in particular wheelchair and buggy users) and is also quite untidy looking.

We admired three adjacent properties on Main Street - Stacks, The Medical Centre and An Teach Bia. This should be an example to you as to how properties can appear without unlimited external projections. The clean lines of these three buildings stand out architecturally. Notices in shop front windows can also look untidy - an example being the 15 or so posters in the otherwise excellent Medical Hall. People like the Medical Hall are obliging to display community notices. Could you organise a Community notice board instead?

Considine's shop front is a wonderful example of a traditional Irish shop front. It is a shame that a uPVC window has been inserted above the shop front. The Post Office is also to be commended for its presentation. It was clean, bright, and apart from the very strident projecting lights, very well presented. Projecting lights are intrusive. Lighting should be discreet and flush with the shop fronts.

The Oh La La premises would benefit from repainting of its plinth and indeed its external stairwell. Some remedial work has been carried out at Blake's Corner by the local authority, but as this area is subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment further work is on hold. We did notice on your Facebook page that some painting had been carried out after our visit – which cannot be credited for this year's adjudication as it was not in place on adjudication day. However all work after June 1st will be considered for next year's adjudication – so not forget to include this.

The banner on the Courthouse was dirty. The railings at the courthouse are excellent. Air conditioning units at the front of the courthouse looked very ugly. The preponderance of the car in this area was making it very difficult to appreciate the built environment. Even the nearby grotto had a 'necklace' of cars around it. The grotto and its stonework looked well. A tiny plant with nothing very much in it was noted at the grotto. The 'no dumping' sign on the wall beside the Courthouse needs replacing all removal.

Parliament Street is rather drab with some exceptions. Some wall bases were grubby. There was much projecting signage on the Bank of Ireland. Byrnes on Parliament Street is to be conserved.

arry's Lane has very fine stone in its warehouses, but is very derelict. There is great potential here. We noted the sound of birdsong strongly in this area. The side of the lane downhill of Supervalu has a wooden fence and wire and is untidy. Broken windows were boarded up. There was a lovely landscaped private garden in the laneway. Galvanised roofs should be painted. The community centre is bright and has nice yellow railings. The flagpole was empty. At Monastery Lane a headless pump needs 'rescuing.' This lane looked 'tatty' on one side/quite rundown. We noted the effort to improve one derelict property.

Supervalu is a fine addition to the town's new building stock.

The Square is lucky to have good properties in general surrounding it. Crosby's on the Square has been reopened.

You are working with the planning section of the local authority in relation to derelict properties in general. You have made two successful applications under the village paint scheme and the Local Area Enhancement Scheme. You have cleared the front of a derelict house on Churchill. The derelict drapery property on Church Street has been renovated.

The Baile Stairiúl information boards help to give everybody a better appreciation of the interesting built environment

of your village. We would draw your attention to the fact that the board at the Hotel has been affected by water ingress.

You have sent reminder letters about the HSE clinic. The walls here and the boundary require painting, and weeds need to be removed from the forecourt edges. The Mental Health centre needs a facelift.

You have sent reminder letters about the Garda Station. The fascia board needs attention and the lamp needs fixing. It would be good if the retaining wall could be planted.

The library needs refurbishment of its wooden elements – the windows and fascia boards. The area office area of the local authority was clean but bare. Could you suggest a planting scheme for this complex?

The railway bridge area is weedy and the bridge is rusty. We would suggest that at least you could fix the broken stone wall and paint the railings at the viewing point - even if you cannot do anything about the bridge itself at present. The views back to the village from this viewing point – as well as the views to the bridge are almost Constable like - with the still waters and wonderful trees.

The Catholic Church was designed by a famous Irish architect. It could do with re-painting and its clock has no hands. Malones garage (to let) was neat.

You do not mention the condition of the convent or encourage us to visit it – and we can understand why. Are there any proposals to deal with this eyesore at present? It is a bad example for children at the adjacent national school to be looking at this built environment on a daily basis. We were also rather taken aback by the prominence of the convent graveyard right beside the school drop-off point.

The National School was well presented but for the fact that weeds were dwarfing the fuchsia and young trees near the flagpoles. The advance sign was also dirty.

We liked the Irish lettering on the Céard Scoil, but the windows contained a lot of clutter. Well done on your use of Irish in the village – even in your mural at the Library.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

You have sought advice from the head gardener at Ennis town Council in relation to the planting of the new council car park opposite the Library. You have received good advice, and on adjudication day the car park landscaping was in place. This will grow into a very attractive car park. Landscaping wise it is excellent. Use wise – you are going to have to get people to use it, and to take some of the huge amount of traffic and car parking from the rest of the town. On adjudication day we were the only car in the car park! Perhaps the upgrading of this area will be followed by the upgrading of the immediate Library area, which is getting just a little rundown. We admired the mural.

You have two permanent tubs in the square and a flower bed at the Fire Station

The native apple trees which are planted last year in various locations throughout the village are beginning to grow well. Well done to the transition year students at the CBS who provide you with annual bedding plants.

You maintain all public grass verges and green areas with the work of the FÚS and TÚS workers. You look after the picnic area on the Lahinch Road.

In relation to hanging baskets on poles – we suggest that you desist from this as your streetscape is very beautiful in itself and does not need adornment. Moreover attaching any object to a power pole may be dangerous. Planting in the soil is much more sustainable – so concentrate on that. We admired the lovely blue planting on the raised bed in the incidental space above Oh La La.

Near the hotel the landscaped and treed areas leading to the river walk are wonderful amenities for your village. The river area itself looks in need of a general rethink and upgrade. The Scouts planted a number of native trees near the Falls Hotel.

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

Well done to the vocational school otter spotters. We would have liked to hear more about their findings and how you are going to present them.

You have secured a grant to deal with illegal dumping in an SAC. You are taking advice on how best to complete the river walk project. You are in contact with the NPWS and the Wildlife Trust.

A talk by the Clare Biodiversity Officer in late May hopefully was well attended.

However your actual projects in this area have been somewhat limited this year so we look forward to hearing about your work in the future here. We suggest that you keep in touch with the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to move forward with plans to survey, interpret and manage your natural environment. You should also read the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. Engaging with schools (or colleges) on even elementary nature study surveys can lead in time to the further analysis and interpretation/presentation of the findings.

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

You promote best practice in waste management through your Facebook page. You segregate on cleanups. Local schools and businesses operate various recycling projects. There are other recycling initiatives ongoing which you individually name. The local hotel is part of a green tourism scheme. You have installed water butts. You are working on a composting area. Sustainable waste and resource management is about more than recycling. It is also primarily 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:**

We were very impressed with the excellence of the presentation of your bring banks. The lovely Liscannor type stone wall is excellent and the 'porthole' receptacle openings imaginative. We are not surprised that you have put it forward for an award. You have improved the surroundings also with your landscaping. This rock garden type planting was charming. This signage was clean and the entire presentation most praiseworthy. We noted a 'headless' road sign pole across the road. Such 'headless' poles should either have their relevant sign attached or be removed. Trimming along the verges of the wall opposite would also improve the general appearance of the area, as would painting and repairing of the field gate across the road. Even the shadows on the paving beside the recycle wall cast an interesting stepped shadow from the stepped walls on adjudication day.

It is unlikely that the undergrounding of cables will take place until there is uplift in the economy – due to the cost of such work. You certainly would benefit greatly from such a project. You were successful in your contact with local election candidates to have posters removed. We would advise you that as black is the most difficult colour for people with visual impairment to see- that we do not necessarily think painting old sign poles black is necessarily a good idea.

One of the most obvious aspects of untidiness in your village on adjudication day was the number and actual size of fly posts. These were located in many places and most noticeably in the Main Street. There was even a (small in this case) fly post near the area offices of the local authority!

We think that the correspondent from a national newspaper who 'chaired a hustings' in the middle of May for 'Save Ennistymon's Heritage' would be fairly sorry to see a poster announcing the event still attached to a derelict site window in the Main Street in June.

We fully encourage you to consider alternatives to chemical weed killers. Such are injurious to the environment. Manual methods can be used insofar as you have manpower, and after that we are certain you will be able to find out about organic methods from your County Biodiversity Officer and from your County Heritage Officer.

Litter control is you say a slow but steady area in which you are progressing. Luckily you have a staff member from the County Council who sweeps the streets daily. One of your volunteers carries out a daily cleanup of the town and FÁS are also helping. It would appear that the cleanup does not involve a litter pick, as you later say that you have a litter rota once a week. We would be surprised if after all this you still have any major littering problems.

We are rather surprised to hear that the volume of litter decreases during the school holidays, so we advise you to continue your work with the Green Schools coordinator.

You say that the area around the Mart continues to be a litter black spot.

In the library area -as we walked towards the square - we observed a non-civic minded lady with a large dog who did not 'scoop the poop'. You should not have to deal with this issue, but as it is an issue obviously – as it is in most places - we would suggest that you think of ways to obviate such behaviour. This does not necessarily mean you should erect signs to this effect. We think education and persuasion is the way to go. How about a dog owners Tidy Towns meeting?!

There was a frayed Clare flag at one of the schools also sporting a Green Flag. We observed one litter bin in Main Street full to capacity on adjudication day. A broken village pump (opposite Ennistymon Fruit and Vegetable Market) painted in the Clare colours (what paint is left) looked extremely badly. The paving on which the two adjacent phone boxes stood had grass growing through the paving stones.

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

Within estates grass areas are the responsibility of the house owners in the estate.

Woodmount have successfully taken ownership of their green area.

We understand the difficulty in relation to holiday home properties.

The residents in Woodview Park, Ard Donagh and Woodmount have organised that the green areas in their estates

will be cut regularly.

Dear Park estate behind SuperValu looked well, and we admired the yellow paintwork on number eight.

We noticed good well-presented terraced houses on the road by the Fire Station- Kilcornan road. There was a weedy footpath opposite these houses.

Bramble Court has an unsurfaced weedy access and there was graffiti at the end of the access road.

At Ard Donagh estate we noted dead, broken or not thriving trees. Otherwise the estate was clean and well presented. Yellow handrails at the top of the estate need painting, and although the residents have taken responsibility for cutting the grass here yet grass needed cutting in the inner open space area on adjudication day. It appears that some chemical weed killing had been carried out and yet there were weeds remaining.

At Ardnaculla we admired the doggy seat sculpture and a nice raised bed with shrubs. Some gate posts and walls need repainting.

Woodmount has a nice boulder name stone. It is a pity about the derelict house opposite. At least the plywood should be painted on the windows. We read that you intend to do this. We also noticed some compost thrown in the ditch nearby.

A cream coloured housing estate nearby has two name boulders with no name inscribed. The estate roads are rough and unfinished.

A well presented two-storey house with blue garage door on the downhill approach to the Church of Ireland with gleaming white window reveals was admired.

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

One issue which rather surprised us was that there was a large planter in the hatched area outside the courthouse which had been allocated as a disabled space. There was not even room for a person parking there to open a car door if there were cars parked on either side. Planting is important but most certainly not at this price.

You focused on the Ennis Road entrance to the town. Generally this approach is good and green. The generic County Clare village sign on this approach is in a nice rural setting. The grass around the village sign had been cut and additional soil has been put into the bed beside the recycling centre. We noted your photographs of this event and have already commented. You also carried out a number of litter picks on this busy road. The County Council gate requires painting. We noticed a little litter near the Lahinch Sea World sign. A good line of trees bordered the road, but we noticed that there were two dead trees in the adjacent housing estate's roadside area. Some pots looked shoddy, although they were well planted, but positioned on a weedy rough surface. We also noted that verge trimming was required between the 60 K pH speed limit and the 50 K pH speed limit, as well as inwards from the 50 K pH speed limit. The water/service building near the county council offices needs a new fascia board and paint. There are some lovely gardens - like that by the river opposite Topaz - along this approach road. The Topaz garage was clean and tidy. We noted some empty hanging basket holders along the riverbank. This naturally beautiful area does not need further embellishment, so we suggest that you remove these redundant brackets.

The Station Terrace area has been cleaned. However on adjudication day we noted some weeds in this area, and the retaining wall needs paint. You plan to upgrade the associated car park.

On the Lisdoonvarna approach we noted a broken fence at the green/white Ennistymon sign. At the generic County Clare village sign there was good planting, but a faded property sign behind this detracted. A cream colour red splay wall abutting the stone wall at this landscaped area would benefit from painting. We noted the sign 'turf for sale'. There was a 'headless' road sign pole here and another in front of the Farm Store. Beyond this we admired the good stone walls and hedging descending nicely into the village. The Farm Store area was neat - except for the wire security railings which might be landscaped. The gate also would benefit from painting.

Off the Ennistymon approach road on the Ballingaddy road the 50 K pH speed limit sign was obscured by vegetation on the right-hand side approaching the village. A large derelict factory site just inside the 50 K pH speed limit sign needs to have its entrance screened. Otherwise this approach was a nice treed approach. A property which would benefit from painting was noted.

In general farm gates within the village and on all the approach roads would benefit from a painting scheme. This would suggest a defined geographical boundary and identity to the village and also would look tidy.

On the Data Display approach road the surrounds of the radio transmitter are ugly on a prominent hill. A weedy forecourt at the footpath near Data Display and Little Dears looked poorly. The surface outside the lovely Liscannor type stone wall was rough and weedy. Verge trimming is required on the right-hand side on this approach.

You intend to improve the area around the bridge.

We noted the cycle sign as we exited the Ballygaddy road, and we noted the bicycle stands near SuperValu. We also noted the bicycle racks opposite Malone's garage. The cycle lane continues to be well used you say although we did not see any cyclists!

We note your comments in relation to the suggestion to paint the old railway.

On the Lahinch Road approach the ground looked a bit rough in front of the County Clare generic village sign - just outside the 60 K pH speed limit. A weedy footpath on the left-hand side beyond the green and white Ennistymon village sign was noted. Could signage be reduced by amalgamation? There were a lot of private/public sign and fly posting near the picnic area generally.

A four directional sign in the Main Street (included Chernobyl project) needed cleaning. This also had two parking signs attached. It is almost located 'on top of a good semi-mature tree.

Quite a number of footpaths - including old flagged paths need rejuvenation.

We agree with you that litter bins need rejuvenation and we would suggest that you investigate with your Architects Department in the local authority as to a design that will be fitting for your interesting town. Your local engineer should also be consulted re positioning of such bins.

The back of the yield sign beside the grotto was grubby. The upright pole of the yield sign and the library sign pole at the grotto should be painted to match the upright of the heritage town adjacent sign.