

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kilmihil** Ref: **75**
County: **Clare** Mark: **269**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	40
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31
TOTAL MARK	450	269

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Kilmihil - Welcome Kilmihil to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Your committee number is eight and you are obviously very hard workers. You hold six meetings but you do not tell us when during the year these are held. You list Clare county council, the Department of social protection, and business sponsorship as well as church gate collection as agencies, bodies and businesses that have supported your activities.

Your only communication method appears to be a newsletter. We would suggest that you consider some modern communication methods such as texting, e-mailing, formation of a website or a Facebook page. These are sustainable methods and also engage with the youth.

We see that you are involved with the Green Schools but do not elaborate on what that involvement pertains to.

An extra effort is made coming up to the competition each year.

Thank you for your map. It is very clear for the centre of the village, but does not extend out to include the entire village (for example it does not include the Croi na mBaile housing estate in its entirety), nor does it extend far beyond the shrine area on Main Street. The map should extend to the village boundaries – as far out as the speed limit signs or the village name signs on each approach road. And each approach road should be named separately and clearly. You have also omitted to name the connecting street between Doonbeg Road and Church Street. And you should number and mark each individual project for consideration by this year's adjudicator on the map - to correlate with a sequential numbering of projects throughout your Entry Form.

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 Kilmihil 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:

Your only projects listed under this heading for this year is the erection of six townland signs. You did not show these on your map, and it is likely that they are outside the village boundary in the rural area. Although they are good the projects they are not in your village.

The built environment of the village is a good example of another unspoilt traditional Irish village. The streetscape dips from entry on the Milltown Malbay/Doonbeg Road downhill between well presented varying height premises on either side. It is a pleasant prospect.

A retaining wall on the Kilrush road junction beside steps which contains the blue Kilrush road sign is cracked and also dirty.

A grey building on the Main Street/Kilrush Road corner is well presented and has simple hood moulding picked out by colour contrasting. Its blinds and curtains are clean and effective. This is important at a strategic corner like this. Likewise the house on the Church Street / Doonbeg road was also very well presented with its cream walls and dark cream painted windows timbers.

The old graveyard on the Kilrush Road is a most interesting site historically. We loved the stone boundary wall along the Kilrush Road and the traditional stile. These lovely stone walls extend outward towards the Reilig Nua, forming a connection between the old and new graveyard, and also between the village and its new cemetery. The adjudicator would love to return with some background information to peruse the wonderful inscriptions and detail to be seen here. We hope that you have made contact with your local authority Architectural Conservation Officer and Heritage Officer in relation to this wonderful village asset. We noted that construction workers who were working on a property at the rear of Main Street were fully respecting the graveyard and not depositing any materials therein, but carefully keeping work materials on their own site. However, another Main Street property's washing was hanging along the boundary in the graveyard. Could this be repositioned elsewhere? We noted that a register of the graves was available at the post office. This information was displayed on a notice board in the graveyard. Very poor grey galvanised buildings are located south of shrine area on the Main Street. These buildings are in very poor condition and detract largely from their surrounds. We hope that developing the park will help.

Opposite The Meadow there is a large cream building for sale, and an ochre coloured building with its gable facing the Street which needs repainting. This looks poorly on the approach to the village. Work was ongoing on a property downhill of the Kilrush Road junction on Main Street. A roofless end of terrace house (yellow terrace) looks poorly at the eastern end of Main Street (northern side of the road) What are your hopes and plans with regard to this property? In general have you been in contact with your local authority with regard to derelict properties in your village?

The Library/Community centre complex on Church Street is a lovely development. It is maintained in very good condition and was painted in bright colours. The three flags flying on the elevated open space, fronting the building, also looked cheerful. The red window boxes echoed the general colour scheme of the building and its paintwork, as did the red seat outside. On one side the raised bed with shrubs looked well but its supporting wall needs repainting. On the other side the pillar box red village pump looked dramatic against the hard landscaping. The adjacent red seat was admired. The red seating theme was echoed again in the church grounds. Just across the road and slightly uphill the schools supplies shop looked very bright and cheerful with similar colours. This is a stone fronted building. The post office is a clean neat building with a good ramp. Nearby the entrance area between buildings- to the national school complex - is rather bare and dull. Painting of the relevant 2 gables and general upgrading of this entrance is advisable, as at present it detracts from Church Street. The roof of the red galvanised shed here also needs repainting. Internally in the complex the huge area of hard surface looks desolate. A planting scheme to include car parking and designated access/egress routes for this area is desirable.

Clancy's is a delightful shop front and the entire building has preserved its original character. A building like this is a treasure in your built environment, retaining as it does its sash windows and uncomplicated original shop front. We wonder if it is a protected structure. Daly's double premises is well presented.

The church is well presented, and again the flagpoles had clean flags displayed. Power's pharmacy is a clean building. The Centra premises nearby has too many signs and clutter - both attached to the premises and also surrounding the edges - including footpath display. Footpath display is obstructive to footpath users, and also looks untidy. (A large advertising hoarding for the same premises is located on the approach road to Church Street.)

The murals on the GAA complex were admired.

St. Pat's AFC pavilion was well presented. The nearby Health Centre also looked well, and beyond this on the Main Street a nice Terrace of houses were well maintained and work was ongoing on a mid-terrace house here

The Topaz garage is well presented.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

To say that we were surprised when we first saw the Shrine area /Stations of the Cross Park is an understatement, as we had no idea of what the very well presented ochre colour buildings were - on first sight. We congratulate you on the excellence of the maintenance of this shrine, and also on the most original concept that this park first was. In particular the wonderful station inscriptions in old Irish script are treasures. The Irish script on the altar face is similar. The tranquillity of the space, with its beautiful shrubbery and good hard landscaping is delightful. Seating is provided for restful meditation.

We are delighted to hear that you participated in Tree Week. Did you plant any other trees other than those at Knocklough Lake?

We particularly liked the simple red seat in the small green recess area at the junction/crossroads near Keating's on the Milltown Malbay approach, which was nicely kept. The stone shed adjacent looked well.

On the northern approach to Church Street we noticed a delightful miniature green space with cream shed and grey galvanised roof - backing the space, with lovely shrubbery and a tree enclosing a sheltered wooden seat. This is making great use of a small space in a delightful fashion.

The Lake area is well outside the village. You include it as part of your entry. It would be important to indicate to us that there is a regular and strong connection between the lake area and the residents of the village i.e. can you elaborate on how much it is used by people from the village as an amenity? We were interested in seeing the 'crannog-like' structure in the lake. The lovely shrub planting on raised beds looked very well by the tranquil lake. The picnic areas were clean. We noted a small tumbledown shed with a broken galvanised roof. Very little litter was evident other than a plastic bottle left on one of the low stonewalls, and a tin can thrown on the lake edge. There was much evidence actually of weed killer in this area, which really detracted from the natural appearance. Generally around this area we saw evidence of unremoved dead grass and weeds. This was particularly noticeable in various areas – such as around the feet of one of the seating areas and along the stone wall edges. There was a clean barbecue area. A white sign holder was empty, and should be used or removed. The lovely bright red picnic table was particularly admired. We look forward to seeing the Swan sculpture in due course and we commend the students and community college for their involvement in this project

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

The improvements at the lakeside include the planting of wildflowers for bees and butterflies.

You have submitted a proposal to the County Council for a People's Park and Amenity Area in the village itself. We noticed the details about this displayed in a window beside Friar Tucks. We also noticed the planning application for the Park on-site. We hope that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to maximise your plans from a biodiversity point-of-view.

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 the further analysis and interpretation/presentation of the findings. As you live in such a rich environmental area you have the potential to enjoy it and learn more about it as well as increasing your marks in this category very readily. We understand that Clare County Council has launched a biodiversity plan for the county. We suggest that you look into this plan and see how you can be part of the overall future of Clare's bio diversity.

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

Congratulations to the school on their participation in the 'one good idea' competition run by SEAI

We read your St. Michaels Community College submission 'The Green Team Saving Energy. The Green School newsletter volume 1 issue 1 - from November is a very good idea, as it will give encouragement to the students and also circulate good practice in relation to sustainable waste and resource management to the parents and other village residents.

Remember that sustainable waste and resource management begins with endeavouring to reduce the production of waste in the first case. We would recommend that you consider attending or organising a Sustainable Waste and Resource Management seminar. Perhaps your County Environmental Awareness officer might be able to suggest where you might attend such an event. You may even host such an event. You could increase your marks in this category as a community by taking on board some of the suggested projects in the leaflet distributed with the Entry Form in 2013. The Tidy Towns Handbook is also a good source of information in this regard. We hope that in 2015 we will hear about your efforts to progress further in this area.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You know that the old mart area is one of your major problems and it forms an unworthy impression of your village on the approach from the lake amenity area- which is also the main road. Last year's adjudicator also referred to this problem area. We were quite disappointed to see that, inside the boundary wall; a large sack of rubbish had been left and emptied out. Close by a wheel hub cap and a few other items were discarded. A dirty planning application notice, dating from 2007, was also noted here.

We are glad to see that you try to hoe and brush the kerbsides. This is far preferable to chemical weed removal.

Well done on washing signposts and painting street furniture.

Once again the Community College pupils are involving themselves in your work through the 'neat streets' project. We note your newspaper cutting. Well done to the students for achieving their award from An Taisce. It would be a

good idea if you could date newspaper cuttings in future for the adjudicator. This is simply to ensure that the relevant cutting refers to something which happened during the correct adjudication year.

Fly posting was noted on a pole near the Doonbeg Road/Main Street junction. This pole was located at the bottom of some steps which had floral planters. The general impression of Main Street was one of tidiness.

Well done also on organising the national spring clean day and for your continuous litter patrols. These are obviously effective as little litter was noticed – other than the dumping inside the old mart boundary.

A 'hot food available' fly post was noticed on the crossroads area at the centre of the village. A plastic bottle was thrown on the boundary wall opposite Keating's.

The bottle banks are located in the side forecourt area of the Topaz garage. We are sure that you appreciate this facility from the owners of this forecourt area. In general the area was neatly presented. However, some of the receptacles are very dirty and need a good cleaning. The white receptacle in particular is very dirty, and some signage on the bins is now illegible because it is torn. Behind the banks there was an area where some baled paper/cardboard was awaiting collection. This was neatly arranged. There were a few items like a beer carton, a plastic bottle, and a few pieces of paper in this rear enclosure behind the bring banks.

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

The residents at Croi na mBaile are involved in your spring clean.

The lovely shrub planting at the entrance to St Michaels Park almost obscures the nice stone sign identifying this housing estate. The open space at this estate is maintained in an exemplary fashion. The stone wall boundary fronting the roadside was admired. Landscaping and mature trees hereabouts looked very well. At the back of the estate shrubbery was admired, but a disused wooden plank set vertically beside this shrub bed could be removed we are sure.

We were impressed with the Meadow housing scheme provided for your senior citizens. This shows great community commitment and involvement. An Moinéar/The Meadow is an excellent estate. It is screened nicely from the Main Street, and the houses within the estate are sheltered and landscaped beautifully. The landscaping is particularly nice around the service building and the yellow colour paint used in the estate is cheerful. The lovely shrub planting at the circular stone bed at the head of the estate was also admired. We noticed the poly tunnel. On enquiring at the service building as to the genesis of this estate we discovered that it is an OAP estate provided by the parish and other agencies. The colourful mural surrounded by cream shrubs opposite the service building centre looked well. Neat individual parking spaces were provided to each property.

A very well presented ochre coloured single storey house just above road level at the northern end of Church Street (at the junction of Church Street and the road that joins Church Street back to the Doonbeg Road) was admired. Its raised garden - forming the apex of the junction here - is delightful.

An estate with no name on the ground, but with a lovely landscaped entrance stone appears to be called Croi na mBaile on your map. Your map only shows part of this estate and does not show the access to it. This estate is well presented.

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

Your students took part in the strimming of roadside verges, which we assume included approach roads. We note your weed control program on the approach roads also.

We Kilmihil from the North – the Milltown Malbay/Doonbeg road. Despite the fact that you say you hoe and remove weeds, we still noted what appears to be evidence of weed killing on the left-hand side on this approach road adjacent to the 50 K pH speed limit sign. A good old gate was thrown in the ditch opposite the 50 K pH speed limit sign. An abandoned rough large site on the right-hand side faced a derelict house on the left. The village black and white sign was obscured by long grass on adjudication day. Verge trimming was also seen to be required on both sides of this approach road. Three farm machines in a site on the right-hand side detracted from this approach – especially as two of these looked to be completely abandoned. We observed a composite stone wall fronting a two-storey house boundary to on the right-hand side. We would encourage you to retain the tradition of local dry stonewalling or local stonewalling using lime mortar. Opposite this wall there was a stone wall with a green railing and good hedging. Surfacing of set back areas in front of houses needs attention. The surfacing of the set back area in front of Keating's premises is also rough. The Keating site has a good stone wall and low hedging. The forecourt is presented in a tidy fashion. However, across the road we saw a very untidy recessed space containing a container, lorry, and various pieces of equipment/materials, as well as a mound of chippings etc.

Opposite Keating's we also noticed a nice stone-walled planted bed and semi mature trees. On the village side of the junction near Keating's there is a dug up bank which needs planting, as there is raw soil here. We admired an attractive raised field with clover adjacent. There is a very good dry stone wall road boundary on the right-hand side as one approaches the village.

We noticed on adjudication day that you have a major problem with the amount of traffic driving through the village without keeping the speed limit. Perhaps you would discuss this with your local authority. The possibility of an

attractive traffic calming scheme – which does not involve bollards, signs, lamps and other engineering solutions would be appropriate for your village.

In the village the college directional sign was obscured by a 'stop' sign, which latter sign is angled incorrectly as one approaches. The road surface in the vicinity of the Topaz garages needs resurfacing.

Some security railings and gates on the northern approach road, facing onto an unsurfaced recessed length of hard shoulder, looked poorly..

Shining new traffic islands and markings were very evident at the junction of Church Street and the other street connecting back to the Doonbeg Road. New road markings in this area are also excellent.

In Church Street we noticed some on-footpath car parking which is both untidy looking and also creates obstruction for pedestrians.

The lovely incidental landscaped green space with its bright red seat on the approach road from the Lakeside amenity is a nice feature on entrance to the village from the East.