

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Labasheeda** Ref: **79**
County: **Clare** Mark: **293**
Category: **A** Date(s): **19/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	46
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	34
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
TOTAL MARK	450	293

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Leaba Síoda. Welcome Labasheeda to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. We are glad to see that you hold meetings all year around. You give us a lot of information about your community involvement and planning. You have regular contact and assistance with the County Council staff and your local member. You appreciate the assistance received. Other public bodies such as the Health Board and Eircom are approached by you for necessary works. You work in full cooperation with the Community Centre voluntary committee, the local GAA club, and the Pastoral Council.

We hope that the newsletter is distributed to all churches which may be represented in your area. You use local media and poster display. You circulate adjudication results annually locally. Have you considered e-mailing, texting, a web presence, or a Facebook page? These are instant, sustainable methods of communication, which appeal to the younger generation.

Your involvement with the local national school has been ongoing for many years. It is a major achievement for the school to have obtained its fourth Green Flag. We wish them every success in their work towards the fifth Green Flag which focuses on biodiversity. You organise various fundraisers. Local businesses sponsor prizes. You are lucky to have five CE scheme workers, although these are shared with three adjacent villages.

We found your Entry Form to be unclear. For instance under the Built Environment and Streetscape category you summarise 'projects undertaken'. You say that your members have undertaken repainting of some derelict buildings. Last year's adjudicator remarked that it was noticeable that houses had been restored in recent times. The adjudicator also congratulated you on the artwork done to camouflage derelict houses. Some of the derelict houses which have been upgraded have already have been completed for last year's adjudication. We have no way of knowing. However we read in your 'highlights' section at the end of your Entry Form that you have repainted three occupied houses and several unoccupied houses for this year. You do not tell us where these houses are located nor show them on your map, so we have to use our powers of observation and hope that we correctly identify them.

You also include planned projects - some in detail - under various category headings. Planned projects should not be included in your Entry Form, as the Entry Form asks only for projects undertaken in this year 2013/ 2014. When you are downloading the Entry Form you should not change the headings or notes. All future plans should be contained in a time-scaled Tidy Towns plan – separate to the Entry Form. This has made adjudicating your village more complicated. Your submission is colourful and very neatly laid-out, but does not follow the guidelines which have been sent out. Projects to be entered in the Entry Form should be those completed (or phases completed) for that particular adjudication year. This year that is from 1st June 2013 to 31st May 2014. Next year the Entry Form

should only include projects completed - or phases of projects actually completed - between 1st June 2014 and 31st May 2015. We hope this clarifies the situation for you. We think what may have confused you is that you possibly downloaded an old copy of the Entry Form, as you include General Impression category in your submission – which is now no longer included as a category.

With regard to preparing a Tidy Towns plan, you say that ‘twice during the spring months committee members walk through the village in order to identify potential projects for the year.’ With respect, we suggest that you should identify projects for a 3 to 5 year timescale. Such a timescale is recommended in the Tidy Towns Handbook. Obviously changes may have to be made, but your overall plan should be in place. This focuses your attention on what is important, but also what is achievable, and it gives you time to prepare accordingly.

Your map is very basic, and does not show projects completed for this year as requested in the guidelines. Please remember to number the year's projects sequentially through the Entry Form and to attach corresponding numbers to the map to be submitted in 2015. We would strongly recommend that you spend time preparing your Entry Form and map well in advance of submission date.

You already have very high marks under this category heading which cannot increase this year due to the issues raised above.

We note your unbridled enthusiasm for your village and the competition, as in the second line of your entry form you declare that the community is ‘bursting with pride in the heritage and the future of the village.’ You have reached a high standard in the competition.

We would encourage you to put more emphasis on seeing Irish in use in the village centre in any ways you see feasible.

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

We have already discussed the problem with regard to separating projects under this category heading into those relevant for this year's adjudication. However we read at the end of your Entry Form –‘painting of several unoccupied houses happened in 2014’. Whilst we acknowledge this work there are still a number of properties in need of upgrading, and quite a number of boundary walls which are grubby. An example a property requiring upgrading is a yellow single-storey adjacent cottage, which is located beside a similar cottage. This building requires repainting of its galvanised roof, and the base of its front elevation. The adjacent cottage which has been upgraded externally appears to be for sale. This row of cottages forms part of a typically vernacular Irish streetscape, and it is important to preserve its unity.

We acknowledge the repair to stone walls and annual painting of other walls. Please repair and rebuild/build with local stone. Where dry walling exists continue to dry wall. If mortar is used it should be lime mortar. Please do indicate the location/extent of wall repair and painting relevant to next year's adjudication on your map in 2015.

The exterior of Casey's premises has been completely renovated, and this looked well. Its redevelopment is in character with the streetscape. You mention the upgrading of the interior of another property. We do not adjudicate interiors, so unless work has been done to an exterior we cannot accredit such work under this category heading. However, we are taking into account the probable likelihood that an upgraded interior will be more attractive to a future occupant, and therefore would be less likely to become derelict.

The Battery Amenity area which you discuss under this heading really belongs to the Landscaping category – apart from the boathouse reconstruction. We have to say that this area is far outside of the village and unless you can indicate that it is regularly used by villagers for amenity purposes, we think you should omit it from your entry in future. The adjudicator visited the area in any event, but was not impressed by what was found there. The double cottage has very chipped paint with concrete pieces thrown outside. The area has suffered badly from chemical weed treatment leaving vast swathes of yellowed grass. Mounds of chippings are located on the site. Meanwhile the surfaces in general are very rough. The Kilkerrin point information board is sited beside a very dirty yellow building, with a power pole and cabling prominent beside. The Kilkerrin point information board itself is an extremely poor condition. Hartigan's Shed has been restored but cannot really be appreciated with the surrounding conditions being as they are. There is no easy access to The Battery at present from Kilkerrin Point. Generally the area is untidy and uninviting. Furthermore the journey between the village and the site is slow with poor road surfacing, evidence of chemical weed killing, and little to reward the traveller.

You list planned projects for this area. Whereas we agree that this can be a good area for locals and tourists alike, we think you - a small population - are stretching yourself too far in trying to deal with it, as well as dealing with your village. There are more pressing problems in your immediate village area. However, the decision is yours, but you must indicate to us how ‘connected’ the area is to your village on a daily basis. The entire approach and immediate area were quite deserted on adjudication day – which was a glorious afternoon – apart from two ladies with a buggy (who were obviously living nearby – as no car was in evidence and it would be far too far and rough to walk from the village with a buggy).

We discuss Labasheeda Cross project under the Landscaping category.

The pump area on the Kilydysert/Kilrush road junction is delightfully presented with its mature treed backing and

simple traditional stonework surrounds. The half barrel planters looked well here -as they 'toned-in' in colour with their surrounds, and were planted simply.

It is advisable to give priority to repainting property in prominent locations. For this reason the single-storey cottage, whose Gable forms part of the recessed area at the Cross area will need painting of the Gable, painting of its discoloured red corrugated roof, and repainting of the lower part of its blue front elevation before next year. This is a lovely traditional cottage in a strategic location.

We admired a lovely mushroom coloured two-storey property with what appeared to be a now disused shop front the window reveals were picked out in grey and the Sash window timbers were white.

The old school – and our dwelling looked very well. Its name plaque is still included. The new school has good hedging and we noticed the bicycle racks. A wooden seat outside could do with renewal. The church is a lovely modern church which is beautifully landscaped and well presented. We admired the millennium stone. But the *pièce de résistance* for this adjudicator was the 1837 church now Community Hall which is an example of architectural conservation. In so many places in the not too distant past churches have been demolished to make way for the modern replacement. Your village approach things differently, and we are glad of that. Its very tasteful and classical gravel and grass setting sets this building off to full purpose. The background of the Shannon Estuary adds interest and beauty to the entire complex. We note that this is not a project for this year. But its maintenance is. The information board looked well with its commemoration of President McAleese's visit, with its two simple stone enclosing flower beds. This is a good example of minimal interference with natural landscaping.

The white cottage on the Kilrush Road corner is very pretty and has an appropriately naturally landscaped garden. We admired a modern house at the church end of the village with a lovely and appropriate seagull stained glass piece.

We noticed a very derelict dirty shed opposite the Health Centre. The Health Centre itself was well presented. Beside this a two storey house needs repainting. The Old Creamery needs renewal and the forecourt should not be used as a chippings depot.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The planning for/landscaping of Labasheeda Cross was commenced two years ago. The flower bed at the junction was noted. The area is sometimes used as a football pitch and as a meeting point for youth. The wall has been repainted and the fencing has been repaired. Again you do not give us a breakdown of the timescale for these works, but we credit you with a percentage of the works carried out during this adjudication year.

Perhaps next year you might submit one or two photographs of the spring daffodils and tulips which 'were a joy to behold.' Obviously the adjudicator was not around to witness the flowers at blossom time but we acknowledge the natural landscaping effect which they had. You have carried out summer planting - including the large flower bed at the shrine beside the church. Well done to the resident who provides space for your growing tunnels. We would encourage you to begin to replace some of your hanging baskets, window boxes, and numerous containers with sustainable planting in the soil. Planting in the soil is more environmentally sustainable, and is also more appropriate for a rural village. Obviously there will be areas where container planting is still good – for instance in rundown areas or neglected corners. Built environment should, in general, stand on its own merits and not always need embellishment through hanging baskets. We encourage you to concentrate on native species tree and shrub planting.

Well done on the Tidy Towns contribution to the National Famine Commemoration through the installation of a stone marker to remember those from the community who were so tragically affected by the Great Famine. However on adjudication day the stone plaque and gravelled area were encroached upon by briars and grass. The Labasheeda Quay information board is most interesting. The condition of the stone shed with the galvanised roof could be improved. The lovely traditional farm gate beside this shed is rusty and needs attention. The edges of the grassed landscaped areas were seen to be very weedy on adjudication day. We also would suggest that there is no need for composite planters on the grassed area here. The picnic table looked well. Views to a rather untidy end of garden (backing onto the Main Street) might be addressed with the owners. You closely monitor the trees in the Quay area. You have plans to improve the area.

The school has gardening projects. At the school we would like to see future conifers in the circular beds replaced with native deciduous trees for the sake of local wildlife. The churn flowers were admired.

We loved the treed approach along the village street as one turned into the village from the Kilrush road. The landscaping at the old church/Community Hall area is exemplary taking into account both mature existing trees and modern grass and shrub areas.

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

It is of great help to you that the schoolchildren are now focusing on their fifth green flag involving biodiversity. Well done to the students for their fruit growing. We also acknowledge your advice-giving in relation to appropriate species planting generally. That you have paid special attention in relation to the protection of hedges is admirable. You do not say when the children from the national school attended the biodiversity workshop, but we credit you that this happened during this adjudication year!

We are delighted to hear that you acknowledge the harmful effects of herbicide spraying and you have agreed to resist from using any such weed control methods. However evidence on the ground would appear to point to the fact that this is not universally implemented.

You are correct in saying that wildlife is abundant locally. The hide is an excellent amenity and educational tool. It is unusual to find the names of birds in three important languages (for different reasons – spoken, heritage, and academic) and we praise you for this. The wildlife and natural amenities tour of the Mont Shannon Park Peninsula has become a regular feature of your Dan Furey weekend.

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

You have a recycling bank at the GAA. You encourage people to save on paper usage – and in this regard we would refer you to our comments on communication methods. Harvesting rainwater for soil irrigation is a good project. We are glad to see that the Post Office is involved in recycling projects, and that the school is also involved with a book re-use scheme. Food waste is an issue which you are aware of and your proposed cookery class is noticed. Sustainable waste and resource management is about trying not to produce waste in the first case. Perhaps you may be able to attend a sustainable waste and resource management information 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. The Environmental Awareness Officer in your local authority might be able to help you to progress your work in this area. But on your doorstep you have your primary school pupils to help you as a community get to grips with the topic!

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We appreciate the extra work you have had in clearing after the winter storms. You do not make a particular case for this, but we feel it deserves acknowledgement. You do say that, this year, this was a major undertaking.

Footpaths were weed free and well swept on adjudication day.

In these economically hard times it is difficult to move forward with undergrounding of cables. Nonetheless you have this in mind, and have dealt with the replacement of some poles. We noted some extensive coiled cabling on one pole, which possibly has no function and could be removed. At the Cross end of the new footpath (on the opposite side of the road) we noticed two power poles adjacent. We assume that the metal pole is a replacement for the wooden pole, and that the wooden pole will be removed in due course

You say that all fly posting is removed in a timely manner but we noted some fly posting at the Quay.

You acknowledge the ongoing maintenance of green areas and general weeding which is carried out by the CE workers and volunteers.

The recycling bank at the GAA is monitored although it is outside your village boundary. You do not show this on your map, but it was felt that the general surrounds could be presented in a better fashion. You have attended to tidiness in the graveyard.

The street resurfacing has indeed given a facelift to the village.

You carry out a twice weekly litter pick, which you increase the regularity of in early summer. Locals attend to their own roads. You have installed antilitter notices. You empty litter bins weekly. Under the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management category you referred to the fact that you plan to draw up a litter control plan. You give us some details of this plan here. This is a very good idea and will be beneficial well into the future. We suggest that you have a look at the County Litter Plan for further ideas and again attach a timescale to dovetail the plan with your Tidy Towns Plan generally.

Well done to the students who participated in the annual litter pick. 25 volunteers in all were involved. The school is also involved in the Green Coast scheme. The paint on the mural of the men looking over the wall has become a little chipped. Perhaps by next year's adjudication this could be attended to.

Near the Health centre we observed concrete blocks thrown against a plywood double door with rusty hinges.

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

Various properties are being improved incrementally. The general impression of residential users in the village is good. You discussed Mount Shannon Park under the Landscaping category. However its correct discussion should be under this category, as it is a housing estate despite the fact that the area is used by others – for instance for bird watching. We liked the old Irish script in the name sign – ‘Estát Cnoc na Croise’. There is a lovely entrance to the estate but the boundary wall could do with freshening-up. Landscaping is excellent in this estate. Once again your plans for this area should be included in a Tidy Towns plan rather than here in the Entry Form as projects undertaken this year. Well done on your approach to plant replacement and also on your work in relation to the drainage pipe. We are delighted that the residents are proactive in cooperating on regular litter picks.

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

Well done on being persistent in your request to have the Main Street resurfaced. We appreciate the enormity of this project both in seeking to have it completed in advance of the waste water treatment system, and in the actual implementation thereof. Well done to the local area engineer who is cooperating with you on resurfacing and footpath works. Further work needs to be carried out on the rough hard shoulder/set back areas in the village beyond the improved area.

On the Kilrush road approach we noticed two derelict properties at the village name sign – both somewhat ameliorated by encroaching vegetation. The black and white metal village sign well outside the village. This sign is located on a pleasant grass bank. The foreground however needs reseeding, and the splay entrance wall adjacent needs re plastering. Well done on your Irish Fáilte welcome sign at Labasheeda Cross. The stone bed surround here matches the stone bed surround around the adjacent directional signs. We also noted the matching stone surrounds of the road directional sign on the opposite side of the road. This looks well. In time we hope you can surface the rough surface surrounding the signs at the edge of the Cross landscaped area. The cream gable adjacent will, by next year, require repainting. The view over the Shannon estuary as one approaches the village from the Kilrush side (at the Cross) is beautiful, and unexpected. But obstructing one's view is a pole stay. It would also be good also if the directional brown tourist signs could be incorporated somehow into one overall sign at this location. White kerbing to an elongated flower bed on the Kilydysert road requires repainting. Nonetheless we loved the riot of colour in this flower bed adjacent to the village pump. The Kilmurry/Mcmahon directional sign on the traffic pole at this junction was slightly tilted.

On adjudication day we observed an amount of on-footpath car parking in the village. This looks untidy, and it is also obstructive to footpath users, in particular to wheelchair or buggy users.

The road down to the Old Creamery required strimming on adjudication day. St. Kieran's Well sign was engulfed by tall grass. On the Kilofin Road we admired irises (flags), dog roses, fuscias, and montbretia - all so evocative of a summer's evening in rural Ireland. This was much admired. However the poor road surface and evidence of burnt vegetation after weed killing detracted somewhat from the effect. An untidy farm complex on this approach also detracted.