

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Miltown Malbay** Ref: **861**
County: **Clare** Mark: **224**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	33
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	29
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	30
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30
TOTAL MARK	450	224

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Sráid na Cathrach. Welcome Miltown Malbay to the SuperValu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 15 members on your committee which is a large representation in your population category. The population category box places you in the 'larger village' category, but you refer to yourselves as a small town. Your group is inter generational and in many other ways hugely representative of the population. You say that fundamental to the success of any committee or group is that everybody has something to offer. We agree. You hold approximately 10 meetings per annum including the AGM. If needs be further meetings (informally) are held.

You list a number of statutory bodies and agencies who work closely with you, and you acknowledge the assistance of the local business and resident population.

You use traditional and modern methods of communication. We hope that your church newsletter is circulated to minority churches in your area. Facebook - as you say - certainly has a use also in acknowledging peoples efforts.

You liaise with the school on many issues. You re-entered the competition last year for the first time after a few years of a break. You refer to the camaraderie which develops on clean-ups. You say that because you have taken the lead and 'delivered' that you are highly respected and appreciated. This is good to hear. We note your proposals to work on the Spanish Armada wreck and to further links between yourselves and Spain.

Your various maps are not what is required. None of the 3 map excerpts showed all the features which should be shown. One single map should be submitted which shows the entire town to its boundary limits. For this purpose we are talking about outer speed limit signs/outer name signs. It should name all streets and laneways. It should show and name each approach road and each housing estate. It should show and name all important public buildings (and parks if relevant). This year the guidelines asked you to number each project completed (or a phase completed) for this year's adjudication sequentially through your Entry Form (where a project is 'mappable', and to use the same keyed reference numbers to show all these projects on your map. You have not done this. Moreover if you are including an out-of-town project (but one that has strong connections to the town – as White Strand) you must submit a map to show the location of such a project also. Note that your maps are in places now out-of-date (reference the built supermarket/not 'under construction' any more).

You should compile a specific Tidy Towns Plan. The Matrix Plan contained in the Environmental Improvement Strategy may be too ambitious for you, and in any event it has a very long-term time scale due to its comprehensive nature. Given current economic circumstances it is likely that a lot of the objectives will be long term. A three year plan will focus your mind on what exactly 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 recent statutory and non-statutory

plans applicable to the town in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2015.

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

We note your attached Environmental Improvement Strategy and read of the proposals therein. Note: Every second page in the copy which you sent us was 'upside down'. This was rather frustrating!

We were rather surprised to say the least that graffiti had been 'scraped' into the concrete base of the Willie Clancy memorial. This 'took from' the lovely new sculpture. This extended all along the new surfaces – beyond the sculpture.

The Catholic Church is a lovely cut stone building with excellent timber windows. It is exceedingly well maintained. At the church end of Church Street there are some extremely well presented cream and light-green houses. Beside these we admired a very clean whitewashed wall with beige doorway. The view from here towards the town centre along Church Street was dominated by overhead wires and bumper-to-bumper car parking. It is difficult to appreciate such a street properly in such circumstances. It is unlikely that funds will become available in the foreseeable future for undergrounding of cables, and we were somewhat surprised that this had not taken place during the good times. However something surely can be done about limiting the dominance of the car. See our comments re the Church area car park.

The Garda Station building needs painting – and even more so its boundary wall. A gable on Church Street was badly in need of paint and attention. It still had its timber sash windows and the lovely (unfortunately run-down) old Irish street sign attached. The ground floor window was blocked off and the shop front also. The plywood inserts needed renewal also. (We look forward to the Street signs with their old-style Irish font).

M. Crowe was well presented, as were adjoining properties on the same side. Across from this three garage doors/shed doors were substandard. A stone wall on the hill beyond Crowe's was falling inwards. On the approach road leading to Church Street we saw a little litter. One 80 K pH speed limit sign here was twisted. This is a rough road. We admired the Barr an Bhaile house name sign.

Tom Malone is a simple but good shop front with simple lettering. A shop front with arched windows and doors is out-of-character and had an empty metal sign holder at first floor level. Another empty notice board was located at first floor level. This looks poorly. The sign holders should be removed. A neon sign – which seems totally inappropriate, was noted here also, and the gable needs repainting. The traditional Halla an Phobail was cleanly painted in the Clare colours.

A row of street properties including An Siopa Beag, S. Murphy and Clancy's were all well maintained. A metal gate beside the Westbridge property looked poorly. The upper floor elevations of Talty's need attention. The marble lettering on Hillery's was admired. An Giolla Fhin is clean and well presented – and again the use of an Irish name is good. D Mac Cruitin is an older Irish name sign, but its colouring is modern (and freshly painted). There were an excessive number of sandwich boards outside The Central (4). The laneway beside Haughton's was dull. We assume that this is the laneway you mention under Wildlife. We consider the 'paving and lighting proposal for the new laneway near the Willie Clancy statue' under this category heading. Yet there is no sign of this happening. (Please confine future projects to your Tidy Towns Plan and do not list them under 'List of projects undertaken this year').

Shuttering on Larkins looked defensive. Where shutters are a security requirement it is best to place them behind window displays, so that they do not create a fortress-like aspect to the street and allow light to emanate to and from the street at night. The Bridal Emporium was well presented. Pick of the Crop had too many notices (wall and windows) - which create an untidy look. The pink paint – especially on the gable needed repainting. Baker's café also had a plethora of notices. The 'texaco garage' in the town centre needs repainting, but as your Environmental Improvement Strategy says - its sliding garage door is a retained feature.

Hogan's Post Office is a credit to those responsible as it was sparkling! Its signage was discreet and in scale. On the Post Office Street (no map/no name) we admired the good trees on the left-hand side as we left the town. The new three-storey development keeps the street line. This development appeared to be vacant.

Supervalu is a fine new development. The good dry flat-tone boundary wall along the Ennis Road was admired. However outside this good wall we observed a rough surface and the evidence of weed killer.

The Church of Ireland had a padlocked yellow gate. A small red pump was noted opposite the Church of Ireland.

You have told us nothing about the West Clare railway station house off the Lahinch Road, It appears to be badly in need of upgrading. This seems a shame given its importance in the local area.

We do not recommend the placing of hanging baskets – self watering or not on a vernacular streetscape. We would encourage you to let the buildings 'speak for themselves'. Hanging baskets distract the eye from the streetscape line and can cause clutter. Moreover the insertion of such baskets can damage the fabric of the buildings. We would suggest that you speak to the County Architectural Conservation Officer in this regard – especially as part of your town is an ACA - an Architectural Conservation Area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You maintain the existing landscaping and strim along the approach roads. The town is bounded on all sides by natural indigenous landscaping. Perhaps this could be managed more effectively within the town boundaries. At White Strand we admired the ox eye daisies. Although you have no public open spaces you are trying to secure a site for a town and community garden. You have a new playground area. You give assistance with the greenhouse seeding and planting which forms part of the Malbay Resource Centre.

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

You are approaching the project work in this area by commissioning a report which will be a template for what to preserve and potential for development. We are glad to hear that you have plans to hold workshops with the help of the County Heritage Officer and the County Biodiversity Officer whom we are sure will give you a lot of encouragement and help. You have great natural habitats in your area and we will be looking forward to progress in this area in relation to survey, interpretation and management. 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. 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 biodiversity.

It appears that weed killer had been used in various places and on approach roads. This is not good for the environment. We would encourage you to consider nonchemical methods of weed control. If you speak to your County Heritage Officer, we are sure that you would be well advised in this matter.

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

You harvest rainwater for use on summer bedding. A number of people are assisting you in this.

Compost is recycled. Your recycle signage for your various events. Your recycle store and you have recycled floorboards. 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 2014.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We are sorry to say that the bring bank site was one of the worst presented bring bank areas which we have seen in recent times. The stone wall behind the bring banks is broken. The banks themselves are very dirty. The notices on the individual banks were torn in places and some were illegible. There was a sizeable amount of small litter pieces in front of and between the banks. Old tyres were thrown behind the bring banks. One of the clothes banks was very rusty, and the clothes banks surrounds were weedy. Probably the worst feature was the rubbish thrown around the untidy weedy surrounds of the extensive neglected site. These were not only small items but included pallets, rusty containers etc. The total impression was one of abject neglect. For 2015 dealing with this should be a priority.

Another 'black spot' for your attention is/was the amount of litter we noted at White Strand and on the approach roads to the strand. There were far too many signs - directional and commercial at the White Strand area. Litter was noted stretching along the road edges here.

The entrance to the vast car park near the church is poor, and the car park obviously serves the town, although nobody was using it on adjudication evening. The entrance to the car park from the Lahinch road is through undeveloped open land and has a poor access surface. The surrounds as one approaches the main car park are very poor with a weedy gravel raised area in which there are concrete cylindrical (chipped paint) planters with nothing but weeds in them. Moreover there was not a parking space to be had in the town itself. Can you encourage people to use this great facility? Page 19 of your Environmental Improvement Strategy discusses this issue at length. Can you make an improvement on this situation another priority?

You regularly partake in Spring Clean Week which this year was launched in your town (for the entire county). You work closely with the local authority Environment Department. You plan to host workshops on this topic

You have painted and tidied up some derelict/unsightly properties but you have not identified these on your map. Nonetheless we give you some credit for what we assumed were these recent looking upgrades.

In relation to litter you do not say how regular your 'regular smaller cleanups' are. You also conduct beach cleanups.

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

The standard of residential users in the town is good. The housing estate below the church is weedy in places and the open space at the end is under developed. There was a very overgrown entrance to a housing estate with no name on the Mullagh road. We admired a nice terrace of houses close to the Church of Ireland along this road. We were happy to see the use of Irish for a new estate called Cluain Liag Ard. You have approached some residents

and offered assistance. The three local authority estates are regular winners in the best kept estate competition. We admired a lovely garden opposite the car park by the church.

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

The TUS workers help you with approach road work. You have organised strimming along approaches. You have worked on stone wall repair on various approach roads and have provided a new stone wall at new stone wall at Mullagh Road. You have provided steps and improvements at Kerins Hole, White Strand. You mention many other issues which you are lobbying for under this category heading, but they belonged to your Tidy Towns plan and are not projects undertaken this year 2013/2014. Some footpaths in the town need resurfacing/replacement.

The approach road from Spanish Point is a long suburban type approach. There were good clean footpaths along this stretch. We admired some nice cottages on the left-hand side. Graffiti was observed at the GAA premises. The walls at the GAA premises are very bare. We suggest that you establish planting along the base of the walls. Alternatively the concrete block walls should be plastered and painted. We observed use of weed killer along the base of the wall at this point. We noted some empty flagpoles at the GAA premises and also a little litter. A grass bank opposite the GAA looked well.

Beyond the 50 K pH speed limit we noted a wall on the left-hand side which was broken in places. You say that you have rebuilt walls here, but there is still some extra work to be done. Fly posting was also noted here. The approach around the old railway cottages was weedy. One of two signs here was empty.

On the Lahinch/Whitestrans approach there was a lot of signage at the Spanish Point junction and also on the way into the town. The verge around the green and white Miltown Malbay sign needed strimming. We do not feel that there is a need for two village/town name signs on any approach road. The second sign which says Fáilte/Near Trí Iarracht is attractive but rundown. Could both these signs be amalgamated into one place? There are lovely views into the town and towards the church from this road. We notice the use of weed killer here. We observed further fly posting and the use of weed killer closer to the town. A derelict shed and some property in need of painting were observed. The garage wall would benefit from repainting. The open area around the cream-coloured substation was rough, and the roadside in this area needed verge trimming. Trimming/weeding had taken place but dead vegetation had not been cleared afterwards and yellowing grass and vegetation looked poorly. Nonetheless this road was somewhat 'saved' by the lovely views over the local landscape.

On the Mullagh road trimming was required around the 50 K pH speed limit sign. The school was very neat and was proudly flying a Green Flag. It would be beneficial to paint the school gates and railings. The higher stone walls near the Londis property need repair. Londis itself had too many signs. A derelict building (on the outer side of the Londis property from the village) would be improved through the application of hanging clean curtains at least. There was some fly posting on a yellow/orange garage door. Well done on the connectivity project.

On the Ennis road the abandoned garage was untidy and the forecourt contained building materials and weeds, a rusty pump and a very ugly canopy ceiling. Verges across from this needed trimming. Most houses here were well presented, but surface setbacks in places were weedy.