

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mullagh** Ref: **82**
County: **Clare** Mark: **235**
Category: **A** Date(s): **20/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	32
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	32
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	20
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	25
TOTAL MARK	450	235

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Mullagh - Welcome Mullagh to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have a large number of committee members at 10. You meet once a month from May to September. You do not tell us whether you meet during the rest of the year. It is important to keep up the momentum throughout the year.

Clare County Council, the parish council, the cattle show, and the local housing estate assist you in your work. You use the parish newsletter to communicate. We hope that you circulate news to any minority churches represented in your area also. You send invitations to meetings, and you have an open door policy. You also erect posters in shops and at the local school. Have you considered some modern communication methods such as web pages or Facebook? These are sustainable and engage with the youth.

We are glad to see you have a good relationship with the school.

You say the competition brings the community together to achieve a united gold. It also makes the locals more aware of how the village is perceived to others.

Your map is very basic. We look forward to an improved map in 2015. Neither have we received a Tidy Towns plan. 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 Mullagh 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:

It would be very helpful if you had indicated the old buildings in the village which had been tidied and also the location of the walls which you have recently painted during this past adjudication year on your village map. There were so many poorly presented properties in the village that it was impossible to decide where you have carried out during improvement works.

Mullagh has a nice vernacular streetscape with varying heights of roofs which add interest. We particularly admired the marble lettering over the now disused Scanlon shop front. The church is extremely well presented with very well landscaped grounds, creating a good setting for the building.

Whereas you have good raw material in your buildings, the condition in which the majority of them were seen by the adjudicator was very disappointing. Maintenance is extremely poor generally. Are there many absentee owners? Is this a problem? And perhaps it is time to consider an approach which will help the village to regain its good appearance. Whereas you tell us that local property owners paint, the evidence of this on adjudication day was quite limited.

Although you mention the repainting of the Community Hall under Approach Roads, we credit it here under Built Environment. At the Community Hall we noted a barrier and an end-wall, facing our approach, which looked poorly. A lovely fuchsia hedge in an adjacent garden helped to ameliorate the situation somewhat. The tangerine coloured garage building would benefit from a repaint – especially at the base of its walls. The same can be said about its front boundary.

The paint on the village pump, now painted in green as suggested by last year's adjudicator, looks a little chipped. We would prefer to see a deciduous tree or some flowers in the planter beside the pump, because a deciduous tree is more wildlife-friendly, and the planter's coniferous tree looks a little bit bare and dull. Otherwise the siting of the pump is classically simple and good.

On the Mall an old shop front – O'Brien's is in a very poor state of repair between the Credit Union building and Sexton's. Across from the flat roofed two-storey house at the Mall there is a dirty white wall and dirty green gable, which detract from the Mall area. Further along The Mall - as one leaves the village a two-storey building on the right-hand side is equally dirty, and in particular its gable facing the village looks very poorly. Moroney's bar is a 'light' in the general poor quality of maintenance the Mall. It must be difficult to keep ahead with maintenance and presentation, where there are so many poorly presented properties adjacent. Full marks to your persistence! You mention the gates erected at Moroney's bar under the Approach roads category, but we credit that project here. Across the road from Moroney's bar a tangerine coloured gable - which faces the approach road on that side of the village - is also very dirty. This is a disused shop called Killeens. Whelan's closed food store would benefit from an upgrading of paintwork on the elevations, and in particular the window areas.

A clean two-storey house in the far corner of the square was noted. On adjudication day a ladder was in use on these premises, which indicated careful owners who maintain their property. Mc Mahon's funeral home was clean, and the signage was very restrained. Well done on this! A grey and cream-coloured two-storey property across from the church would benefit from repainting of the lower sections of its wall. Its gable is also very dirty.

A gable wall to the school is badly in need of a repaint. The school boundary wall to the road needs re-plastering in places and repainting. We admired the old school sign which has been replicated nicely in the boundary wall on the occasion of the 2004 extension to the school.

The Tubridy gable facing B&B needs repainting, as does the Tubridy property across the road. Is this property closed? If so perhaps the sign could be removed. An ESB container/substation looked very badly.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You mention the erection of window boxes on derelict houses. You did not show the location of these on your map and we failed to see them. Neither did you show us the location of the trees which you have planted on both sides of the village. You have replanted flower beds in the church grounds, placed potted plants at either end of the village, and cut and maintained areas such as the open space at the housing estate. The extension of the flower bed at the sports field was noted. We admired the lovely yellow shrub with fuchsia in the garden of the house opposite the school. The landscaping around the church is very good. The children's play area is a good amenity.

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

The planting of native broadleaf trees at the church and at the entrance to the sports field is helpful to encourage native wildlife. This and the extension of the flower bed at the sports field entrance are the only projects you list under this category heading. We would strongly suggest that you contact the County Heritage Officer and County Biodiversity Officer to look for assistance in furthering your efforts under this category heading. You live in a pristine environment with huge resources on your doorstep. You can harness these to enjoy them and for educational purposes. You will need advice and help. Much advice is to be found in the Tidy Towns Handbook. 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. We understand that Clare County Council has published 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.

In relation to the amount of chemically weeded areas noticed on the approaches to the village we would recommend that you desist from weeding chemically. Chemical weeding is injurious to the environment and wildlife and leaves visual scarring

We would encourage you to try to weed manually or through chemical-free methods. Your County Heritage Officer would be able to advise you in relation to this issue.

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

You mention that a windmill workshop was held and local people have put up windmills. We did not see any of these windmills on our visit. We would be grateful if you can let us have further details on this program in 2015.

The school does not appear to have any Green Flag in evidence. Is it participating in the programme?

The Green Flag programme is a very useful educational programme both for the students and their parents, which in turn transfers to the participating communities. It is an effective way to be active in relation to sustainable waste and resource management. You could also consider getting involved in the Green Homes programme.

You mention a litter awareness programme which was set up with the pupils in the school, with an emphasis on recycling. Firstly you do not give us any details of this program, and secondly recycling is low on the sustainable waste and resource management pyramid. The other projects which you mention under this category heading include the clothes recycling at the community centre and the mulching of grass to provide fertiliser. You also attempt to minimise water usage where possible. But you have not given us any details as to how you implement this policy. Waste minimisation is what it says. It is about trying to reduce the amount of waste produced in the first case. You will find lots of helpful advice in the Tidy Towns Handbook. You also received guidance notes about this category with your Entry Form in 2013. We recommend that you make contact with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority, who we are sure would be more than happy to help you perhaps organise a Sustainable Waste and Resource Management seminar.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done to the FÁS workers who sweep and keep litter under control. You also have a Rural Social Scheme who trim approaches and hedges, mow lawns, water flowers, paint and conduct general maintenance. You are extremely lucky village to have such assistance – help which many villages would envy.

Although you mention the installation of litter bins in 2012 (which you are currently maintaining) under the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management category, this maintenance is considered under this category heading.

You have maintained the children's play area.

It would be very helpful if you could have given us some 'before' and 'after' photographs of the projects undertaken this year 2013/2014, and also to have shown these projects on your village map will stop
Where exactly was the graffiti removed from? Which stonewalls were cleaned? Where were the new drains dug for storm water?

In general field gates in the village look raw. Would it be possible to paint all field gates both within and on the approaches to the village in a uniform colour? This could possibly be your local GAA colour. Such a project would give an identity to the village, whilst creating a tidy clean effect.

Two very rusty poles support the sign for car parking at the entrance to the sports field. The sign for the opening of a tourist hostel in 2011 on Whelan's closed shop front window is surely out of date, and should be removed. Fly posting was noted on a pole beside this premises.

In The Square the presentation of the shop front facade of Whelan's (beside the post box) is very poor also. The post box itself would benefit from a repaint, and the community defibrillator holder (despite being an excellent initiative) looks badly, as its paint peeling.

The siting of the recycle bins is acceptable, but the surrounds need upgrading. A rusty oil tank is located nearby and the clothes bank itself is rusty.

The beds at the school car park were full of dead weeds which had not been removed. Long grass in the green space of the car park also needed to be trimmed. You say that you maintain the grass around Mullagh school on the approach from Spanish Point. Could you extend this maintenance to these issues? A wall across from the school looks poorly. It needs repainting. Prefab roof stays are peeling. The fence between the School and the Health Centre is of very poor timber and needs upgrading. The Health Centre itself needs freshening up and grass should be cut in front of the adjacent disused shed. It is a shame that the wonderful views over the surrounding countryside are interrupted by a less than attractive foreground along this approach.

Generally the village was litter free. We noticed some litter in a recessed area of the Mall and a very weedy splayed access area. A plastic bottle was thrown on the footpath edge. Well done to the workers involved. When you are compiling your Tidy Towns plan it would be a good idea to include a litter management plan for the future. The siting of the recycle bins is acceptable, but the surrounds need upgrading. A Rusty oil tank is located nearby and the clothes bank itself is rusty.

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

Pairc Fhionnabhair Mhoir is very well presented especially at the entrance with the scanner type flagged enclosing wall.

Many house properties in the village are well presented, but the overall impression, because of the condition of some properties, detracts from the good properties. A two-storey flat roofed house in The Mall area looks poorly, both in its built presentation and its curtilage.

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

The Fáilte sign at the junction of the road leading to your village and the main Spanish Point/Quilty road is located well outside the village itself, but is a nice feature. Well done on the use of Irish in this stone sign. The lettering looks well picked out in red, although the fada on the Fáilte appears to have escaped the red paint! We also noted that the back of this nice stone Boulder says Slán go Fóill. A rusty post box on the green area here detracts from your nice new sign.

Eventually one arrives at the entrance to the village itself at a small 'twist in the road'. The village sign for Mullagh here is the old black and white simple classical sign. However it was partially obscured by grass on adjudication day. There were nettles beyond this point and a 'headless' road sign pole. The sign should be reattached and the pole removed. Further in towards the village, the school road sign would benefit from cleaning, and the removal of a blank white sign above the standard school sign on the same pole. The other school road sign at the village end of the school is rusty and leaning badly inwards. The school sign painted on the road needs touching up.

A lot of weed killing was noticed on the right-hand side with ensuing yellowing road margins. A 'slow through the village' sign requires repainting. Trimming is badly needed on the left-hand side.

The views to the left as one approaches the village are spectacular. We noted a rusty green sewerage vent pipe on this approach.

The new railings on the footpath are well maintained, and they are a safe and visually pleasing feature. The new footpaths in the village look extremely well, although in places some sweeping was needed on adjudication day.

The lined car parking spaces on The Square looked neat, and will control parking at busy times to create a neat effect in the village when it is busy. We noted the good and well delineated wheelchair parking space outside the church gate.

The approach to the sports field and the parking area is roughly surfaced and would benefit from landscaping.

At the far end of the village (opposite approach road) we noted a very rusty pole on the sign for Kilmihil. Beside this there was a bent and rusty gate. The stone sign for Ceathru an Logáin was lost in a very untidy and scrappy green space with signage, a poorly presented planter, an advertising sign and some materials. There was a fly post on the power pole, together with old used bunting. It is neither attractive nor safe to be attaching objects to power poles. On the other side of the junction there is a lovely stone sign Fáilte go Mullach, but it is 'competing' with a dirty version of the black and white village sign visually. The entire area on the side of the junction looks particularly badly, as it has been treated for weed killer and is yellowed and scrappy. A lone planter with a deciduous tree does nothing to ameliorate the situation. This is a very bad first impression to the village from this side.