

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **O'Callaghan's Mills** Ref: **1044**
County: **Clare** Mark: **228**
Category: **A** Date(s): **03/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	32
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	30
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	20
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	6
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31
TOTAL MARK	450	228

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Muihle Úi Cheallachain- Welcome O' Callaghan's Mills to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 12 committee members and you hold monthly meetings, as well as a working meeting for four hours weekly during the summer period. This is good commitment.

The only agency, body or business that you say has supported your activities is Colourful Creations of Tulla. Have you not sought help from your local authority?

Your communication methods are via newsletter and newspapers. Have you considered using some modern communication methods such as Facebook or website, e-mail or texting? These are immediate communication methods, they are sustainable, and they also engage with young people.

We are glad to hear that the students use the Tidy Towns work as part of their Gaisce awards. You feel that the village is improving bit by bit. You also feel that because people are working together there is a better community spirit. This is good to hear.

The projects that you have completed for this year should be numbered and corresponding numbers should be shown on your village map. The numbers should follow on through the Entry Form. In other words projects under Built Environment should be numbered from 1 onwards and the numbers should be continued into each category heading. In other words you do not begin at 1 again in the second category. Please let us have such a map for next year.

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 O' Callaghan's Mills 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:

You mention 'planting flower beds on the approaches to the village' under this heading but we consider them under the Approach Roads, Streets and Lanes category. The second project which you have carried out and listed under this category heading belongs to the Tidiness category as it refers to 'the tidy up of all public areas.' The third project – 'sign to be erected for well' has not been completed. You ask if we have any help on how to deal with

derelict buildings. Firstly, we would say that most towns and villages have this problem nowadays. The best approach is to try to deal with the owner/occupier initially. If this fails, then you can talk to your local authority - which has certain powers under the Derelict Sites act to deal with such issues. However, it is preferable if a cordial arrangement can be agreed between yourselves and the owners. We wish you every success with this work. Some dereliction was particularly noticeable at the outer edge of the village on the Broadford road approach, and in the area of the bridge. You have dealt with one of the properties, but there are others in need of attention.

We admired the school sign O' Callaghan's Mills. The handball court would benefit from painting before next year. Grass should be removed from the gutters. We noted broken windows in the GAA pavilion nearby.

The water tower (which is visible at the Loch Brigid junction) would benefit from painting.

The Mills Tavern would benefit from surfacing and lining of the very large car parking area. It would also greatly benefit from a landscaping programme. The building itself requires some upgrading. Across the road a sign for the pub has a very rusty upright pole.

White Walls between the corner ochre colour houses beside the river and the buildings along the old Mill road need re-whitewashing.

Doyle's shop would benefit from repainting. It would also be preferable if some of the forecourt materials be stored away. The grey wall on the bridge side of the shop also needs repainting. Additional screening to screen the yard area behind the wall would be beneficial. Sheds on the Mills side of the shop with corrugated roofing looked very dirty. We appreciate that it is difficult to keep walls by the side of a busy road clean. However, this is a strategic location within the village, and we hope you will be able to improve this area.

The Muileann Uisce sign is bent. We wonder if the Mill was open to the public before conservation work began on the site. The mill is a very attractive structure, and we assume that it is Protected. From our observations, we think that the remedial work is being carried out to best conservation practice. We are not sure if this is a private or public project, and if the mill is to be open to the public in the future. The work seems to be at a standstill at present, and the site is quite untidy. If works do not recommence before next year, we would ask you to see if the site can be temporarily screened in an appropriate tasteful fashion - until such time as the work is complete.

Across the road there is a derelict cottage and a car was parked in its foreground and some tarpaulin was thrown on the ground here. A small stone shed adjacent would benefit from repainting of its red door and also of its galvanised roof. As we emerged from road L3004 we noted that two cars were parked in the very small forecourt of the single story house opposite the junction. This detracts from this view of the village Street.

A two-storey derelict property with a single story side extension was observed beside the bridge on the Broadford side. This is quite a strategic location within the village. We hope that you may be able to make progress with this derelict house also.

Red corrugated roofs of long sheds near the bridge are badly in need of painting and detract from this central pleasant area.

The church was nicely landscaped and well presented.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You have tidied and maintained grass verges. You have many nice grassed areas on approach roads. You have also been looking after the area between Terovannan Road and the well in relation to storm damage. You are also considering paving and seating in this area.

We admired the good natural landscaping generally inwards from the bring banks to the village centre. There are some wonderful dry stone walls and mature trees on the final stretch of the Broadford Road approach.

The raised gravel bed with your beautifully clean Clare ways map sign looked really well. The planting in this bed was very colourful. Close to this bed we noticed a lovely old hooped farm gate between stone pillars.

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

You continue with planting of flowers and shrubs to benefit wildlife (bees, butterflies, etc.) You have not given us any details as regards the location or numbers of plantings of this nature - neither have you shown them on your maps.

You live in a beautiful rural area, and the sound of the blackbird could be heard throughout the village.

It appears that weed killer had been used in various locations throughout the village 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.

We noted a concrete cylindrical planter without any planting. This was located on a beautiful piece of glass edged road with beside a lovely tree. Such concrete pipes like plant containers are not appropriate for a rural setting. We would encourage you to plant in the soil in a sustainable fashion.

We noticed the many planted beds at the school, and we would like to hear more about these next year.

We admired the lovely grassed area on the village side of the Mills pub. There is a nice curved stretch of roadway here leading into the village.

We noticed a bird box on a tree beside field gates on the Broadford side of a two story derelict house.

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

You collect waste metal. You use bottle banks and clothes banks and you arrange for clothes collections. You do not give us any further information on how you as a community are trying to minimise waste

We feel that you would very much benefit from some help in progressing your community in this 'field' and in improving your marks in this category. Sustainable waste and resource management is 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:

The only project you list under this heading is the regular cleaning of kerbs and footpaths. Last year's adjudicator suggested that the repair of stone walls would make the place tidier. We note that some repairs have been carried out in the traditional way as recommended in 2013.

We would suggest that you encourage relevant owners to paint farm gates throughout the village and on the approach roads in a uniform colour. This will give a sense of identity and 'boundary' to your village. It will also create a tidy effect.

A gate opposite the GAA pavilion and beside the recycling bins should be painted. A very good clean boundary wall and nice landscaping enhanced the bring bank area. The receptacles themselves were in good condition, although the white one could be cleaned. The bins are set back beside mature trees.

Some gates, pillars, and walls need paint and we observed one cracked wall.

Having visited the well on adjudication day, we would strongly suggest that you make it more accessible before inviting people in to visit it by erecting a sign. The pathway was very overgrown and the well area quite 'unpresentable'.

The block wall across the road from the Mills pub has lost a lot of its capping and looks untidy. In a recessed space beside DT Autos three very weedy planters (with another concrete cylindrical planter) looked very poorly on a weedy broken concrete surface. This area detracts hugely from the effort you have put into improving the derelict stone cottage adjacent. However the window boxes which you have put on the windowsills of this 'upgraded' derelict property let these improvements down, as on adjudication day the window boxes were either empty or growing weeds. Across the road a series of three grey roadside sheds require upgrading. Just beyond this 'upgraded' derelict property fallen trees were still lying in the hedgerow. If these were the product of the January/February storms, they should have been removed by adjudication time.

A few pieces of litter were observed around the village but these were minimal in amount. We saw little litter, but we did notice two plastic bottles and an ice cream carton on the road edge opposite the bring banks. Putting together a management plan for litter management within a Tidy Towns Plan is helpful.

Generally the village was weed free, although we did notice a few weeds around the bridge area and elsewhere.

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

You mention under this category heading that you are planning a picnic area. However what is required under each category heading is the list of projects undertaken this year 2013/2014. This refers to the Tidy Towns adjudication year which commences on 1st June and ends on 31st May. So the projects which should be listed this year are those commenced after 1 June 2013, and completed before 31 May 2014. For next year's adjudication you should list the projects (or phases of an on-going project) commenced after 1 June 2014 and completed before 31 May 2015.

You do not indicate that this picnic area is to be located in a residential street or housing area. If not it should not be listed under this category heading.

There are some very well presented houses in the village and in general the standard is good.

We admired a house opposite the church which was very clean and bright. It had been freshly painted, as had its boundary walls.

A nice nameless cul-de-sac of houses close to the church was admired. A 'headless' road sign was noticed opposite the access. The stained wall at the back of the estate would benefit from painting. A small cherry picker at

the entrance to the estate did not appear to be serving any useful function on adjudication day. We admired the small 'sculpture' made out of green plastic bottles at the entrance to this estate.

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