

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ruan**

Ref: **86**

County: **Clare**

Mark: **292**

Category: **A**

Date(s): **05/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	37
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34
TOTAL MARK	450	292

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Ruadhán - Welcome Ruan to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Nineteen people whom you individually name on your committee is an excellent turnout from a small population, and this shows in your village. This adjudicator had not visited Ruan heretofore, and was impressed by your village. Well done on your monthly committee meetings – we assume these happen throughout the year. The community committees involved are listed, and we are very happy to see your senior citizens taking an active part on your committee. Your statement “each of the above mentioned all give huge support to our village in every way possible” speaks volumes for the pride all sectors of the community have in Ruan. Furthermore the long list of agencies, bodies, and businesses that have supported your activities is very impressive. This shows the high regard in which you are held.

Your communication methods are both traditional and modern. Using Facebook and e-mail engages with the youth, and is also sustainable in relation to paper waste. If minority churches are represented in your area we hope that you circulate your newsletter to their members also.

Having three young people represented on your committee is excellent. Combining school projects with the Tidy Towns projects is cooperative and effective. We like your idea of making Tidy Towns tasks social events for all ages. Your wildlife walks, guides and lectures involve youth, and you organise specific workshops for students.

The feeling of achievement in carrying through a project, and the promotion of pride in the village are some of the ways your community benefits from being involved. We are glad that entering the competition ‘gives the residents a feeling of satisfaction’. It is good to know that all ages, genders, and nationalities take part in projects, which in turn will lead to further enhancement of the village and its people.

Thank you for your very neatly and clearly compiled Entry Form. Thank you also for your clear map and for your three-year Tidy Towns Plan, which is succinct.

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

Well done on taking all the recommendations into account from last year's adjudication report. The seminar and workshop held in conjunction with Clare County Council Conservation Officer and Clare Local Development Company - detailing the maintenance and conservation of graveyards and traditional iron work, and the construction and maintenance of stone walls using hydraulic lime, is highly commendable, and will help you to deal with your built environment in a proper professional fashion.

The graveyard has all the appearances of a graveyard which has been lovingly cared for in a correct fashion. We note the assistance of the County Heritage Officer also in this regard. Well done to the historic group and the two Tidy Towns volunteers who have documented the graveyard.

The idea of unifying farmyard entrance gates through painting in traditional colours is something that is highly effective visually, and also gives a sense of place to your village.

You have seen to the visual enhancement of old sheds on the Ennis road and on the Corofin Road and attended to various stone wall maintenance projects. We credit the enhancement of boundary fencing and stone walls on the approach roads under the last category 'Approach Roads Streets and Lanes' That you are building and maintaining all the stone walls using only hydraulic lime is best practice. One nice example of your appreciation of your stone walls is the way a school sign is set back behind the wall, in a gap created for this particular purpose.

Well done on the repainting of the village pump. It looked resplendent in its pillar-box red paint. The lovely red floral arrangements reflect the colour of the pump. We question as to whether placing a litter bin beside the pump is a good idea visually. The delightful field of daisies behind the pump added to its visual impact.

The Old School/Community Hall is well presented. We particularly noted the lovely stone shield with its Irish inscription, commemorating a native son who was one of the founders of Conradh na Gaeilge, and we also noted that you had retained the old foundation plaque. The new school is also well presented.

The church is a credit to the parish, and we are not surprised to see that your parish priest is involved with your work, as he is a member of your committee. The church design is relatively unusual for a village church. We would suggest that it would add to its presentation to have flags attached to the empty (on adjudication day) flagpoles. We read the foundation inscription, and also read about the church's history on a website (Clare County Library.) The Anchora Salutis heraldic crest - and other various inscriptions within the graveyard are very interesting. The mausoleum on top of the hill on the Ennis Road looks very well with its good quality maintained iron railings - bordering its well maintained grounds.

We would particularly complement you on the very effective repainting and decorating of a derelict house on the Dysert Road opposite the church (number 14 on your map.) Boundary walls and other properties on the same side of the road are pristine. However the boundary wall to the car park at Purcell's pub would benefit from repainting before 2015. Empty hanging baskets holders on the gable of Moloney's pub should be removed if not in use.

Morty Kelly's pub is really well presented with its excellent clean painting and its lovely landscaped surrounds. It was a fitting venue you for your refreshments after the spring clean.

Well done on the use of Irish in your bilingual stone signage. We also noticed that some of the wildlife species named on your nature board are also named in Irish. We encourage you to extend the use of Irish within the village road / estate naming etc.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You list a large number of projects under this category heading. The semi mature trees along the road to the school were admired. The gravel beds on the curved end of the footpath here looked very well. We also noted your stone beds in the grassed area, although we think the informal gravel bed planting is more in keeping with your rural village character. The gravel beds around the bring bank looked superb with their shrubs and rock type plants. We would encourage you to repeat or augment this planting type. It is also unnecessary to put floral boxes on your lovely stone walls here, as the walls 'stand' on their own merits.

The lovely shaded small square area which is your community seating area at the church junction is very attractive. The landscaping at the church and the general maintenance of the church grounds and the graveyards – both old and new – is exemplary.

The trees inside the ivy clad stone wall opposite Toormore were much admired.

We admired the floral arrangements tumbling out of the 'upturned' floral container. This was an unusual but effective idea. Even more imaginative are the milk churns – which this adjudicator really liked. 'Full marks' to the person who designed this display. It is interesting, attractive and appropriate.

Throughout the village we could occasionally get the beautiful scent of flowers, and this is particularly noticeable around the recycling centre. The fruit trees at the bring bank are enhancing features.

Well done on your polytunnel.

Even though we know that you are involved in making window boxes and using hanging baskets, we think that sustainable planting in-the-ground is 'the way to go' for your very unspoiled village.

The Móinín – the old fairground is a lovely amenity for the village and is closely accessible. The semi-mature trees looked very well as do the existing mature trees. It is all excellently maintained. We admired the good sculptural plinth.

Your concern for the Irish Cancer Society is shown by your children donating the daffodils they grow to the Society annually.

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

Throughout our visit to your village we heard the sound of birdsong continuously. You are lucky to live in such an unspoiled rural village.

The insect hote -I Óstán na Feithidi - looked well and the adjacent bird boxes give ready access to the birds for their supper needs! We are unsure if this dual location is a good idea or not! Perhaps you would check with your biodiversity officer. We are glad to see that you are in contact with the Clare County Biodiversity Officer. Your interest in the topic, and the help of the officer are evident in your various recycled pallets housing hedgehogs, birds - including owls, and squirrels, bees, and insects. We are delighted to know that you are aware of the Clare Biodiversity plan. We think you certainly deserved your photo shoot. The schoolchildren have enhanced areas with their wild flower planting. The 'Bio Blitz' is another aspect of your interest in this category.

The Riasc area is a wonderful amenity, and we read the wildlife sign with interest. The bird hide is a wonderful amenity for budding ornithologists! The Ruan frogs have a lovely sanctuary. Bats are also catered for in an old shed opposite the sanctuary.

You are very lucky to be so close to such a lovely and biodiverse amenity as Dromore Woods. It is appropriate that such an enthusiastic community should have such a resource close at hand.

We salute you for your good practice in avoiding the nesting season for hedge trimming. You also cut your road verges appropriately to allow for wildlife corridors. You mention spraying for weeds under tidiness and litter control. We would encourage you to consider nonchemical means of weed control. You might speak to your County Heritage officer about this.

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

You have many recycling projects such as recycling a creamery bulk tank, recycling pallets for various uses and recycling unwanted clothes. The local businesses who donate the pallets to you are to be praised. We note that even your poly tunnel is recycled. You have recycled waste branches from storm damage also. You acknowledge the help of the man who provided the wood chipper and also ran the workshop on hydraulic lime.

We note that you segregate litter when you collect it and take it to the bring centre.

We note your composting area at The Móinín. The compost produced is used throughout the village. We note that you are members of greenhomes.ie You also hope to encourage the school to participate in the Green Schools programme. We heartily endorse this. In the meantime you are doing your best with such matters as energy conservation at the Community Hall and other waste reduction efforts. Well done on your water harvesting system which caters for flower bed watering.

It is important to remind people that Sustainable Waste and Resource Management is about more than recycling. You seem to understand this yourselves. Sustainable waste management 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 relevant revised guidelines sent to you in 2013. We recommend that you make contact with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority, who would, we are sure, be more than happy to help you perhaps organise a Sustainable Waste and Resource Management seminar. You have potential to increase your marks in this section

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The adjudicator's immediate impression of the village was of a neat and tidy settlement. On leaving Ruan this impression was confirmed. There are a few issues needing attention. Generally signs are clean around the village. On the road to the school a double school road sign is in need of renewal. The upper sign is particularly poor, but the lower sign also has slightly damaged corners. On another school sign we observed some fly posting. We noted three posters attached to a power pole. You do monitor and removed fly posting usually, so it was surprising that we found fly posting on our visit.

Would it be possible to plaster the GAA block walls - or to plant climbing plants by the walls - as the block walls are out of character with your wonderful stone walls? We would also like to see the GAA gate painted and some of the attached signage either removed or amalgamated into one sign. The steel gate might be painted to match the colourful school gate.

Some of the signs on the Food market are faded, although the red and white paint - echoed in the adjacent red gate - generally looks well.

We noted a very rusty large metal power pole which had a 'Mid Clare Way' signage attached.

Footpaths throughout the village were found to be weed-free and clean. You certainly do maintain a clutter free environment, and your own site is carefully managed.

Well done on being involved in the National Spring Clean. Litter is most certainly not a problem in Ruan. This is because you carry out a litter pick twice a week. The national school children get involved in a monthly litter pick. This has an effect on the inhabitants - in making them more aware of the necessity to cooperate in not littering. You

are very committed to keeping your bring bank free of litter through a daily morning patrol.

To further improve your litter standing in this category continue with the good work, but also include a litter management plan in your Tidy Towns plan. You can dovetail this plan with the County Litter Management plan. Your County Environmental Awareness Officer will be able to advise you in this regard.

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

All the houses in the village 'put their best foot forward' and the results are evident. It is a good idea to have a resident from each estate on your committee. Toormore estate is generally well presented. This was recognised in 2012 when it received an award for the tidiest estate from Clare County Council. A long white boundary wall needs paint and elevations facing the exit and houses and shed likewise. Toormore has a wildlife area where you have just planted trees.

Hazeltown is very well presented and we look forward to its signage which we hope will include an Irish version of its name.

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

We approached Ruan from the Corofin direction. The Ruadhan village sign on this road is a simple black and white sign, which looks well in its rural setting. However the sign itself is showing signs of age and would benefit from replacement with a similar simple sign. The good stone walls, trees and hedging along this approach are very attractive. We noted the new 'Fáilte' sign on the immediate approach to the village. The grass was trimmed neatly beside the Fáilte sign and the flowers looked well. The stone sign itself looks very angular against the natural stone wall. Large swathes of well mown grass greet the visitor as one approaches the village centre.

We particularly admired the lovely sylvan approach on the Dromore side entering the village via the school. Once again your care of the traditional stone walls is very effective, and the trees in this area are also very beautiful. Road markings are reasonably good, but a red road mark for the school at this point needs repainting.

The Dysert road approach has well trimmed verges on one side, and on the other good grass edging with semi mature trees. Around the entrance to the Riasc wildlife area we noticed a rough area with some chippings and (blue) piping at the side. A container was noted on the approach road on the village side of Riasc. We noticed the new planting at Riasc road mound.

We will look forward to the maturing of the Hawthorns on the Ennis and Dysert roads. We note that you trim your approach and connecting roads on a weekly basis.