

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Scariff** Ref: **87**
County: **Clare** Mark: **255**
Category: **C** Date(s): **26/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	34
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	24
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30
TOTAL MARK	450	255

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Scariff - Welcome Scariff to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have a committee of eight core members. You are a representative group. Your committee meets monthly during the winter. During the busy months you meet twice weekly for a clean-up. We are glad also to see that you find time for a cup of tea and a chat. The photograph of the group which you submitted conveys a great sense camaraderie.

You list a lot of people in the town who help you in various ways. To have the support of local businesses is very important to both from a practical point of view and indeed from a psychological point of view. It shows how well-regarded you are, and how much your work is appreciated. You also obtain help from Clare County council and CLDC.

You communicate by various methods both modern and more traditional. We hope that your parish newsletter is sent to any minority churches represented in your area. You interestingly plan to utilise your local library more with regards to communication in the community.

We are delighted to see that you have a teenage group and a junior group. The schoolchildren are involved with the Green Flag programme. It is a great achievement for a school to be working on their fifth Green Flag. The local youth club are also helping you, as are the local Scouts. You worked with Scariff TY students this year.

You list nine reasons why you have inspired your community to make Scariff a better place. We particularly note your intergenerational ethos and we wish you luck and good weather with your Harbour Festival.

Throughout the Entry Form you have included planned projects under the various category headings. Only projects (or specific phases of ongoing projects) undertaken for this adjudication year 2013/2014 should be listed in the Entry Form. Planned and future projects should be included in your Tidy Towns Plan only - and separately. You also appear to have occasionally mixed up categories in which projects should be listed. But we accredit them under the correct category - or across categories if appropriate. In your tabulated three-year plan you should indicate which projects have been achieved in the part of 2014 relative to this year's adjudication - that is up to 31 May 2014.

With all due respects - your town map was of absolutely no help to the adjudicator, because it was simply a very artistic portrayal of a very limited part of the town. The map should show all streets and name each street individually, should show and name each approach road, should show and name each housing estate, and should show and name each significant public building. Furthermore - and extremely importantly - in the guidelines you are asked to sequentially number each project for this year's adjudication in the Entry Form and to show each such

project clearly numbered with the same numbers on the map. Of all of these items which should be shown on your map, you only showed 10. This makes it extremely difficult for an adjudicator when visiting your town. It also means that in our report it is very difficult to reference our comments to exact locations. It is critical that you send an appropriate map in 2015.

We read in last year's adjudication report that you have a Tidy Towns and Environmental Improvement Strategy document. You have not submitted a copy of this document nor indicated what you have extracted from it in relation to your Tidy Towns Plan.

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

Scariff has an interesting built environment. Its streetscape is unspoiled vernacular in type. Because of the changes in level the varied roof heights add interest to the long streetscape. In general properties are well maintained and have managed to retain the streetscape line without intrusion. For instance – the infill development at the Credit Union certainly does fit in with the overall streetscape.

You are aware of the issue of the condition of the rising gables on your Hill. A blue gable at the top of the hill in particular stands out as requiring repainting. We note your comments in this regard, and we suggest that you continue to seek to have these gables painted. On the Hill there are some rundown abandoned houses. Overuse of projecting lighting and empty plant holders were noted in this area. Weedy gutters also detracted from the general impression. The cinema is still in need of some attention, and we note that you are aware of this. The 'clouds' mural is an effort, but it is damaged.

Horgan's Computers was clean. The Centra premises -although clean - had too much signage on its front elevation and in its window. The Post Office building was impeccably painted and neat.

There are too many signs on various premises and we noted advertising in shop windows caused a cluttered appearance in places. You have approached businesses about visual clutter in response to last year's adjudication report. The O' Shea premises is traditional but it is in poor condition. As it is for sale, we sincerely hope that it will find a new owner to look after it soon.

We agree with last year's adjudicator in relation to comments about the Bank of Ireland. This bank is in a most prominent position on entering the town from the south. It is the first thing one sees going up the hill. You say that you met with the bank manager, and it would not be unreasonable to have expected improvements before this year's adjudication including the screening of bins. Furthermore this adjudicator would suggest that there is too much advertising in the bank windows. This looks untidy. The bureau de change sign is faded, and the fascia board needs paint. For such a prominent - if not architecturally-pleasing building - this is poor.

J Moloney bar had good simple lettering.

Meehan Moroney Solicitors is an exceptionally well-presented traditional building.

Your bridge is part of your built environment, and we do not recommend the attachment of hanging baskets to such stone structures which may also be Protected Structures. In fact we would suggest that you concentrate on in-soil planting rather than on hanging basket embellishment in general, as the former is more sustainable and also is more appropriate for a rural town.

You maintain the Market House.

Certainly the traffic management plan involving the one-way system has improved the overall experience of enjoying the built environment of Scariff. It has also opened up other areas of the town which the visitor or passing tourist does not normally see - unless they spend time in your town. This is good, but actually adds to the geographical area involved of prime 'first impression' which you have to consider in your plans. Despite the traffic management, the impression left with this adjudicator (whose visit extended beyond shop closing time) was of the 'car ruling'. Is there any possibility of pedestrianising any part of the town?

Although you mention the painting of the school railings under the Approach Roads category - it is a project which we credit you with under this category heading. We loved the red and green railings at the school. The school is very beautifully landscaped. Well done on this work. However the entire complex would be improved if the car park here was surfaced. The frayed Green Flag at the school should be replaced. The garage lean-to facing the junction near the school - and across the road - would benefit from repainting.

The Catholic Church is well presented and has a lovely stone wall and good railings and gates. The red door stands out very well against the stone walls. Conversely the concrete block wall to the parking area opposite the church looks very bare. The flagpoles at the church were empty. We were impressed to see that you have the ramps at the church signposted.

The Fire Station was very well presented

The Library is a lovely new modern building but its forecourt would benefit from some tree planting and landscaping to 'frame' this building.

In due course perhaps when economic circumstances are better further wiring can be placed underground.

Additional use of Irish - including your village approach signage is recommended

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The raised landscaped area at the centre of the town was very well presented, with good mature trees along its edgings. The hard landscaped areas within this general landscaped area looked well.

You discuss issues in relation to the water tower area clearance and walking routes and trains, together with the riverside park under the Built Environment category heading, but we consider them under this category heading where they really 'belong' and credit you accordingly here.

Grass was planted where dead roses were previously.

We discuss your planting within the housing estates under the Residential category. However they do contribute also to the overall landscaping of the town.

You have planted some trees including apple trees and seasonal flowers. Trees in the region of the school and adjacent areas looked well.

Hanging baskets can be useful to brighten up dark alleyways or to help to ameliorate bad areas. But we feel that they do not enhance your street - which streetscape is good and should stand on its own merits. Hanging baskets will never hide poor maintenance. Native tree planting however can enhance a streetscape. We again suggest that you plant in the soil where at all possible.

Although you mention it under Approach Roads we note that you with schoolchildren planted winter bedding in the vacant flower beds in Market Square.

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

You have left areas of the riverside park as wild areas to preserve natural habitats. You also state that the many hedgerows and green areas on the outskirts of town are good for wildlife. However, you do not appear to have carried out any other projects particularly focused on this category heading for this year. The projects which you list under this category heading are future projects and plans.

We suggest that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to move forward with plans. 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 bio diversity.

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 give us details of your recycling centre. You support the community garden in its provision of composting and gardening talks. The Co-op also has a second-hand bookshop, and there is a second-hand shop at weekends. We would like to see you getting involved in waste prevention programmes as well as recycling programmes.

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.

The community Co-op now has solar panels. East Clare community Co-op has a rain water harvesting system. You list actions under the Green School programme which children are involved in. You rightly indicate that this awareness transfers to parents and therefore at the community.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have cleared the area adjacent to the library as suggested in last year's adjudication report. Lanes and gateways have been cleared of debris and weeds during the cleanup
You allow some short-term advertising.

A substation in the town had a little graffiti.

Although you discussed the cleaning up of the GAA car park and entrance under Landscaping - this is a project for

this category heading.

We noticed fly posting beyond the church on the town side, and also some (election?) stays on a pole.

An artistically designed modern sign for the library had been slightly damaged.

In relation to litter control you organise events for schoolchildren. You have litter pickup evenings. You work closely with business and local authority to ensure that litter is collected regularly. Encouraging healthy eating eliminates bar wrappers which is a project benefiting the previous category also where we also accredit it. Nonetheless there was a small amount of litter in Fossabeg, on the road between the Church and the town and on the Gort and Mountshannon approaches. We would recommend that you draw up a litter management plan, and next year please tell us more about your rota system and the calendar of litter picking – its regularity etc. We know that you meet twice weekly in summer for a clean up. But litter was mentioned by last year's adjudicator – and we are mentioning its existence again. The situation has improved but there is more room for improvement – and more regular summer litter picks may be necessary.

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

The standard of residential properties in the town centre was mostly good, as was the standard in 'suburban' areas.

In time the green area at Fossabeg with its lovely mature trees will become a carpet of daffodils in springtime. Well done on your daffodil planting here.

You mention the removal of tractor tyres from the Fossabeg estate under Tidiness. But as this work is in a housing estate we consider it here. We observed a battered barrier near this estate. There was also fly posting on a pole at the entrance to the estate, and we noticed a little litter here. The enclosed elliptical area on the open space was free of litter. Usually such enclosed areas are the likely gathering grounds for a litter. Some fungal staining appeared on some of the houses. But in general the estate is well presented with nice semi mature trees. We also observed some evidence of weed killing along the grass verges within the estate. Please note our comments under Wildlife.

You have planted trees inside the wall of Derg View estate.

Fruit trees have been planted in the Connacht road estate and in Fossabeg estate. The name sign for the Connacht Road estate was a riot of colour with its lovely floral planting. The riverbank estate facing the Scariff Harbour Road was neat and freshly painted.

You are seeking to provide bilingual signage for estates

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

The one way system has added benefit to the town.

Opposite the Bank we noticed a double 'headless' road sign. The relevant signs should be reattached or the pole removed.

The approach by Scariff Rugby Club and Fossabeg estate was in need of verge trimming in places. We noticed a 'headless' road sign just outside the entrance to Fossabeg estate. Our comments in relation to such signs apply here also. Setbacks in front of houses along this road would benefit from resurfacing. The road verge needs trimming opposite the school/approach/corner bank near the church.

Between the church and the town we admired seats in the stone wall with raised hedged bedding. At the bottom of the hill on this approach we observed poor road surfacing. As one rises back up to the village we admired a terrace of old houses on the right-hand side on the left-hand side there were new houses with good gardens.

A derelict house faces oncoming traffic just beyond the 50 K pH speed limit sign. One of the speed limit signs was turned inwards. We noted a gravel mound in front of a derelict rusty red hay barn. Another rusty 'headless' pole should be removed. This was located near black rusty railings (beside a house with a planning application sign). The walls to the OAP houses need painting. We observed poor timber railings in the area of the connector road to the Mountshannon Road by the old school. What is the use of the old school now? We noted parking on the footpath near the 'stop' sign. There was some advertising along the Mountshannon Road approach. We admired the good clean footpaths along this approach, as well as the generic County Clare Scariff sign in front of a linear shrub bank. Some dead trees were noted on this approach. The 50 K pH speed limit sign on the left was turned and bent. We observed few pieces of litter on this approach. There was a very rough area near the ambulance station. Some fly posts and stays were observed on a pole opposite the ambulance station junction. Some very poor quality properties here at the rear of Main Street detracted from this area which has recently opened up through redirected traffic. These properties back onto the R 352. But there were some good gardens and stone walls across the road as one approaches the curve back to the bridge. One of the signposts for Mountshannon (close to the Fire Station) was grimy. A 'no right turn' sign near the Library was partially obscured by vegetation.

On approaching from Tuamgraney we observed that the Finsa premises were tidy. The generic County Clare town sign for Scariff was nicely sited on a green space with mature trees. The speed limit signs were very clean, but one

appeared had 'burnt' vegetation killing around the bank in which it was located. Please refer to our earlier comments re weedkilling.

On the Gort approach there was some fly posting. Towards the village centre some poor properties were noted on this approach and the new footpath to the riverside park has not yet been surfaced finally. The road edge also had chips which should be swept. The Mart area looked very poor beside the riverside area. The number of notices on the civic amenity centre gate looks untidy. Could these be amalgamated into one separate sign? We admired the village sign on the grass bank backed by hedges. The playground area was in good condition. A little litter was noticed along this Gort approach.

Some road surfaces are poor in the town especially at the top of the hill approach from Tuamgraney.