

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tulla** Ref: **521**  
County: **Clare** Mark: **257**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **03/06/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	34
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>257</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat An Tulach. Welcome Tulla to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. Firstly we would like to congratulate you on your various awards of recent times. You were the winners of the 2013 Endeavour Award for County Clare in the National Tidy Towns competition. This is a great achievement and must have given you a lot of encouragement. It is obvious that it did as you continue to work hard. You also are home to the 2013 Best Kept Local Authority estate winner for County Clare 2013. You have 10 members on your committee. You meet every three weeks. Clare County Council and several local businesses and organisations help you.

You communicate through various media. Would you consider setting up a Facebook page or website? Such communication methods are instant and attractive to the younger generation. Your Christmas projects are good PR. We are delighted to hear that you have a youth representative. The primary school are also involved with your work. We noted the photograph of the transition year students at work.

You say that the community 'benefits immensely' from the competition, and that people remark constantly on the improvements in the village. Well done on this.

Thank you for the clearly laid out Tulla Tidy Towns Plan. Your map was helpful to the adjudicator, as it was an accurate 1: 2500 Ordnance Survey map. However it does not name all individual streets or approach roads and you have only added a few of these in your numbered spots on the map. You should add these to next year's map. This makes the adjudicator's visit quite confusing. It also means that your adjudication report will -in places not have clear reference to specific areas/items. The map shows some public buildings and you have added others via the numerical list which you keyed onto the map. You have indicated housing estates and this is good. You may note however that in this year's Entry Form guidelines you were asked to number each project for this year sequentially through the application form and to show these projects on the map which you submitted. Please remember to read the guidelines carefully. You have shown one of your projects (number 15) on your map. Some projects will not be 'mappable'. But those that are should appear on your submitted map.

#### Notes

Please note that we use the word 'village' throughout to describe your centre, as your category is a 'large village'. Our inclination would be to refer to the settlement as a 'town' and we are unsure as to which title you prefer. We hope that this is to your satisfaction.

Please note that in referencing this report you will find that we are unable to be accurate in our street name references and our approach road references. This is due to the fact this information is missing on the maps which you submitted. This makes it difficult for the adjudicator on the adjudicator's visit. It also makes it difficult for you to

accurately follow the adjudication report in relation to specific

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

Your major project under this category heading for this year was the removal of the derelict house at the crossroads near the petrol station. We appreciate what a major project this was for you, and you were helped by the County Council.

The Main Street is a typically vernacular Irish street. It is very much holding its character. The changes in ground level and the curve along the length of the Street make for an interesting built environment. Properties are generally well maintained. The Liam O'Meara shop front had simple gold effective lettering, and no external signage which made the shop front attractive. Similarly with the ML Corbett premises, which also retained its traditional fabric canopy fitting and canopy. It was good to see the Irish name Bia FollÁin, and the property was well presented. However, in general we noticed that there were quite a number of projecting light fittings and other projecting objects - such signage - on a number of shop fronts. This causes visual clutter, and is not adding to the integrity of your streetscape. Name plate lighting should be discreet and flush with the building elevation. Other projecting signage – and indeed any unnecessary signage should be avoided where possible. The Power House is another example of this situation. The premises is presented really well, but the external projecting lighting detracts. An Teach Ól was very cleanly presented, but again had a number of projecting items on its front elevation. Car parking on the footpath outside also detracted.

Supervalu was well presented, but the large banner at first-floor level, covering all the first-floor fenestration, took from the look of the building. Would it be possible to screen the storage located to the side of the building?

The Courthouse is a beautiful stone building, and is an important part of your built heritage. We were quite disappointed to see that it had been fitted with uPVC Windows instead of traditional timber sash windows which would have been an integral part of the building. The Post Office in pink was cleanly painted, but there was a plethora of signage in the area of the Post Office/Credit Union.

The Library is located on the hill, and is a very good building

The Stables is a very appropriate use of a special part of your built heritage. You were farseeing enough to ensure that this building was conserved for a new use which is appropriate. Signage is discreet and suitable. A silver metal gate here was greatly admired. The gate has lovely detailing. The building itself including its own black gates, which have their own detail (including the gate maker's name – H. Lee) is very well presented. Double field gates adjacent should be painted. A most artistic traditional and well painted red gate was also admired near the nature park.

M Mc Arthur is a most striking traditional shop front and premises. The colouring in grey/red really stands out. The old licensing notice on the fanlight adds to its interest. It is an important part of your built heritage. At present it would benefit from repainting. Below this on the Hill An Teach Buí was clear and bright, but had a lot of notices in its window which detracted somewhat. Leprechaun House is a simply presented attractive frontage.

The Conlon shop front is traditional and classical. However timber sash windows have been replaced. There were also some empty hanging basket brackets on this property. In relation to attaching hanging baskets to properties in the Main Street, we would urge you to desist from this practice as your Main Street can 'stand alone' without embellishment. Besides that - insertion of such brackets can damage the fabric of the buildings. We would encourage you to plant in the soil where you can, as this is more sustainable. Should you wish to bring landscaping into the Main Street you might discuss the possibility of some appropriate tree planting, suitable for such an environment with your local authority.

We loved the blue Bakery premises on the Main Street. And we notice that your students also did also in their survey. Well done to the owners who have this property presented in such a good fashion.

The Cnoc Na Gaoithe second phase opened in June of 2013. It is good to see the old convent being put to a new and appropriate use.

We understand the problems you have with dereliction. They are nationwide. All you can do is let us know next year what communications you have made with NAMA or the relevant owners in the case of dereliction. The local authority will also be of help to you in relation to derelict sites if you cannot make progress with the existing yourselves

What a good idea that the students took on the recording of old shop signs and chimneys. This was a very novel idea and one which is very appropriate to this category heading. We were very impressed with this project idea. Have they met the County Architectural Conservation Officer to present their findings?

The southern access to the landscape/graveyard area is very poor in contrast to the rest of your village. It is derelict, untidy, has graffiti, is weedy - with poor surfaces and yet has great potential. Is there a possibility you can hasten at least a clean-up and eventually an upgrade of this important area? . St Patrick's Pipe Band premises is presented in a meticulous fashion with no gaudy name signs are otherwise. However it is unfortunate that it is located in an area which is very rundown at present.

The connecting road – The New Line - which contains the church has many good residential properties which are well presented (including the Church) at the Main Street end of the street. However there are some properties that would benefit from repainting. There traditional vernacular nature of the streetscape is good  
A bright blue well presented village pump was nicely set into a stone wall.

The Tulla business centre front elevation would benefit from an upgrade. The Bank of Ireland is a (dated) modern infill building. To ameliorate its angular presentation – some landscaping of semi mature trees would help. It would also help if all the notices in the windows were removed, as they look untidy. The surrounding stone work helps to integrate the building into its surroundings.

The petrol station complex on the Kilkishen approach is a nice modern development. However a very large empty sign holder at the road boundary edge detracted from the overall impression.

On the Gort Road we admired a disused two-storey shed which has its windows blocked in and its door painted to match – all bright blue. This looks well. There was quite an amount of dereliction in the area between The Green and the town centre. The properties involved form an important part of your streetscape, and we wonder if you have spoken to the County Architectural Conservation Officer of the local authority in relation to the possibility of doing something about this area?

Tulla has a great tradition of stonewalls and we are glad to see that this tradition is being maintained.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

Even though it was a wet evening on adjudication day - the Memorial Garden was being worked on. Well done to the two men involved. Here we admired the pretty floral raised beds. The boat was not yet planted for the season. The bird table was admired. A terracotta coloured empty plastic planter was observed between the school and the Memorial Garden. We admired the green space opposite the Memorial Garden where the East Clare Way signs were located. However, the Country Market and adjacent Lotto signage took away from this roadside landscaping somewhat. Nearby a double road sign at the housing estate junction was 'headless'. The relevant sign should be replaced or the two poles should be removed.

The landscaped Fairgreen area above the Pairc Nadúir was beautifully maintained, and the semi mature tree edging very much admired. The older existing buildings including walls here have been cared for and included in the overall excellent impression created. Gravel bedding is attractive. The enclosed shrub beds have been delineated in a curved natural fashion and not inserted as geometric insets, which would be quite out of place in this natural area. We noted the Cillín Memorial, suitably sited. The elliptical raised bed with the circular inserts and natural stone plinth intrigued the adjudicator. Little was planted as yet in this bed.

Below this landscaped area, but adjacent on the far side, the picnic area looked most inviting, clean, and well maintained. Your new circular picnic table with its curved dry stone wall enclosure and new seating looked most attractive. The raised beds with heathers and the semi mature trees added to the excellence of this area. Even the litter bin with the 'bruscair' notice was individually designed for this area. It is evident that you have great taste in such undertakings. You planted new trees in the Fairgreen for National tree week.

Back in the town the Tulla crest presented as a stone monument was admired. It is delightfully surrounded by simple but effective planting.

The Church of Ireland graveyard grounds are maintained meticulously.

You began work on the new garden area where the derelict house stood in April of this year.

The FÁS workers look after maintaining grass areas.

We note your comments in relation to the boundary wall at the graveyard and the playground.

Three tier floral planters have been placed at approach roads.

The AFC is an amazing development set in beautifully landscaped grounds with a very well landscaped avenue. Even the railings on this site are excellent.

We admired the lovely raised gravel bed planted with good shrubs and some lilies on the important access area to the An Pairc Nadúir/Fairgreen and graveyard. The landscaped area at the old Forge site looked really well with lush vegetation around the stone Memorial.

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

You maintain their nature Park behind the library.

The bird and animal boxes are maintained

The transition year students helped you with work at the pond.

Well done to the primary schools classes on all their intriguing projects. The Sixth class worked on their soil analysis project. This will be of interest to you as a group, and indeed to all gardeners in the area. It also introduces the students to the natural environment, geology, agriculture, horticulture etc. Students are using the weather station and learning all about climatic issues. The fourth class look after a wormery, using the school biological waste. Thank you for the photograph of the wormery. All these projects make us almost wish that we were back in school! We think that these projects are highly commendable and contribute to your work in relation to this category heading.

Not alone is the wildlife area near the Library a good example of a wildlife dedicated green space, but it is also very colourful with the use of primary colours. The various inserts are complemented by the mature stone wall backing and planting. We admired the surrounding greenery including the fuchsia. The small sign using the old Irish form of lettering 'Pairc Nadúir' adds interest. We noted the 'Bat Cove,' Mr. Hedgehog's domain, the ladybird 'skyscraper', the butterfly garden, and the bird estate. The Hidden World was also noted.

We observed some hedge trimming (location detailed under Approach Roads category) Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming, you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Should there be a road safety issue involved to contact your local authority. We also noticed evidence of weed killing. Resultant burnt vegetation had not been removed. 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:**

The fourth class look after a wormery, using the school biological waste

A rainwater butt is managed by fourth class at the primary school.

The National School had a Green Flag flying proudly. The children are encouraged to walk or cycle to school. A composting bin, constructed by FÁS workers has been placed in the Protestant graveyard. You use the glass bottle recycling bank at the Stables. There are many other initiatives which you can consider focussed on the prevention of waste production. We would recommend that you keep in touch with your local authority to find out about various ways in which you can advance as a community in this area.

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:**

A small garden on the site of a former derelict building at the secondary school was planted.

You have painted over graffiti found at the back of the church.

The bring centre at The Stables was clean. However we would comment that the exit seemed quite 'blind' in relation to the footpath. Whereas we do not normally comment on safety issues – and they are really none of our business – we still feel that lowering the wall at the exit here would make existing cars more aware of pedestrian traffic on the footpath. The lovely stone wall boundary to the bring centre needs no adornment, and we would suggest that you remove the planted trough from the stone wall. It will be needed in a worse way someplace else. The signage for the bring centre across the road is clean, but the sign itself on the pole is at 'half-mast' and looks untidy as a result. Two ugly raw metal poles extend upwards from the sign.

We note your comments re the row of trees at the soccer field.

You maintain the playground area. The playground is a fine development, but we noticed that an access wall was cracked and there were a few pieces of litter at the playground.

Unfortunately graffiti was noted on the gable of a derelict property as one descended along the southern entrance/exit to the Fairgreen/landscaped area above the village. Further graffiti was noted on the right-hand side on a corrugated grey garage door as one returns to the village. In fact this descent (or ascent if you choose this route upwards to the landscaped area/graveyard) is in very poor condition and full of dereliction. We assume that you are considering this area in your plan 'to liaise with the County Council in relation to derelict buildings'. It would be a terrible pity if people saw this access to the graveyard etc. And did not realise what excellence there is both north of this on the other access - and in the landscaped area itself.

An untidy corner at the Playschool directional sign needs some attention. In front of the brightly coloured blue village pump a plastic bottle was thrown carelessly.

There was an empty hanging basket standard just below the bank.

We noticed some litter on the Hill area at the southern side of the village. There was some fly posting on a pole here which also contained a Clare Way walker's mini sign.

Waste bins have been constructed at the primary school.

Litter patrols by primary school students take place. The secondary school students also carry out a weekly litter patrol.

You organised a poster competition in relation to the spring clean/litter control/scoop the poop etc. The environment section of the local authority helped you in this project by adjudicating. The winning posters were displayed for spring clean week. This gives more impetus and publicity to the spring clean program, and hopefully encourages new participants.

The Gaisce awards involve litter patrols.

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

The standard of house presentation in the streets and elsewhere is very good.

The two-storey house just below the Bank of Ireland was presented in an impeccable fashion. This is in a very prominent area and well done to the owners.

We admired a beautifully maintained and elegant farmhouse on the village side of the entrance to the AFC.

Grass is cut on a regular basis in the estates and trees are now maturing also. You advise the residents as how to treat the stained plastered walls.

Planting at the entrance to the award winning housing estate The Green was admired. The blue plants were classically simple and very effective in their linear planting. The stone name sign for the estate looked well. We also spotted the small plaque commemorating this award. Shrub bedding looked really well

At Cuirt na bFhiac walls could be painted on the access road or planted. We admired the good tree planting here.

The single-storey terrace of houses opposite the National School looked well.

There is a nice Terrace of houses beyond the Tulla Comhaltas premises. In this hill area a few properties are in need of paint.

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

On the Bodyke Road the directional sign for Feakle (11 km), which is located on a nicely grassed triangular space at a junction, has a very rusty upright pole. The simple black and white metal sign announcing one's arrival at the village was admired. It is set on the road verge simply, and the verges adjacent were trimmed in an appropriate fashion. However, a Clare County Council 'no camping' sign needs to be replaced, as it is very faded and worn. Unspoiled views upwards towards St. Mochulla's church ruins looked very interesting, and would warrant investigation for a curious traveller! We noticed some fly posting on this approach. We also noted an auctioneering 'for sale' sign bolted to a good mature tree. This is bad practice.

On the Kilkishen approach road there was a roofless derelict cottage on the right-hand side near the Garden Centre. Road linings along this road need repainting. A speed limit sign is turned at right angles. The stone wall along the footpath here is good and no weeds were observed. We noted a derelict site/house beside the garage. However this was well set back from the public road. The footpath along this stretch is totally weed free and we admired the good stone walls. One power pole was leaning. Seasonal laburnum and white lilac in gardens was admired. We presume that the container and prefabs will be removed from the school site as soon as the new school is complete. Around the Rectory area along this road we admired the lovely gates.

Some street signs had been deposited inside the wall of the site with a pavilion.

On the Gort approach we noticed a lot of hedge trimming. All paths were weed free. A gable fronting the road - together with boundary walls - might be repainted before next year. The village name sign is on the far side of the 50 K pH speed limit sign. In this area we admired the wild ox eye daisies. Some empty road sign poles were observed just before the 50 K pH speed limit. The litter free sign was dirty. It appears there may have been some weed killer used in this area. A site entrance sign was attached to a tree near the school. The gardens along this approach and generally in the village are excellently presented. Derelict houses - one with a planning application notice were observed. On the approach to The Green from the Gort road the road surface is somewhat poor. An empty concrete planter near the Sixmilebridge sign was noted. We admired the enclosed rock surrounded bed.

On the approach road by the AFC (L8148) we noted some derelict land near the junction with the Gort Road. There were a few weeds along the footpath in one place on the road to the AFC. The new footpath was observed. There was nice tree planting near a junction for Sixmilebridge.

On the Scariff approach road the suppliers' yard on both sides of the road looks very poorly because of the amount of raw security fencing. This is at the entrance to the village from Scariff and forms a poor first impression. Whereas we acknowledge the necessity of open storage we feel it should be well screened from the public road through

judicious landscaping.

At one of your approach road junctions with the main road the 'stop' sign is dirty and on the adjacent green space we counted five different objects. These were - the generic County Clare village sign, a planter, a lotto advertising sign, a cafe advertising sign, a clay shoot sign, a road number sign and a large supermarket advertising sign. This forms a poor first impression of untidiness to your otherwise tidy village. You have one of the old Bord Fáilte village signs with the harp on this approach - these are now a rarity - it was a little grimy and its pole was rusty Do conserve this sign. On this approach also a striped yellow and black junction sign needed painting of the pole. The C and M foods premises just outside the speed limit has security railings which would benefit from landscaping. We noticed some hedge trimming on this approach road. Please refer to our comments under Wildlife. A school sign required cleaning and renewal just inside the speed limit sign.

A double pole headless road sign at the school wall end of the Memorial Garden should be removed if not required. A blue red and green planter in the Main Street (beside a directional sign post) was positioned very close to a tactile surface. We were rather surprised to see bicycle racks 'invading' the space of the wheelchair parking space at the Library. The (empty) half barrels outside Scoil Mhochulla should be removed from the footpath.

Road surfaces around The Stables are very poor.

We note that some rough road surfacing is poor because of the laying of pipes.

Due to the imminent completion of the new secondary school you have been advised by the local authority not to carry out any repair on the walls in that area.

The laneway from Main Street to the church is of concern to you

Finally we would encourage you to consider painting all field gates on approach roads and within the village in a chosen uniform colour. This will give a sense of unity to the village and will increase the look of tidiness which is already apparent in Tulla.