

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Athy** Ref: **354**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **272**
Category: **E** Date(s): **10/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	44
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31
TOTAL MARK	450	272

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2014. We have noted that your committee of eighteen people hold monthly meetings throughout the year and have strong links with residents, voluntary groups and schools. You receive support from local businesses and have quarterly meetings with the council. You make good use of local newspapers and church bulletins in communicating with the people in your area. The involvement with local schools is commendable, especially having a committee member as liaison. Many thanks for attaching information on your activities including festivals as well as pictures of clean-ups. Please consider providing the information in a bound folder for ease of examination by an adjudicator when visiting your area; the various loosely stapled sections are easily mislaid. We have noted the arrangement with a local judge whereby you provide useful work for some offenders. Thank you for map but we advise that a town the size of Athy would be better viewed if the map were more detailed. We are impressed with our visit to Athy and were delighted to see the many circular plaques in many locations with important heritage information. We encourage you to prepare a three year plan that would direct your focus on projects that might require some years to fund and implement.

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

The busy Main Street had a mix of building types in various conditions. Bradbury's was well presented. The Athy Youth Café looked well. . . Most buildings in the square were in good repair. The heritage plaques throughout Athy were very interesting. The Heritage Centre is a fine building in good repair and well used as the Library. Good plant containers and surrounding trees all looked well. However, we were shocked to see concrete poured at the base of trees in this part of the town. This is a very bad practice as it limits air and water exchange with the roots and most important of all, the concrete will girdle the tree stem causing it to die prematurely. We urge that this concrete be removed as soon as possible and some other surfacing material be used. Some alternatives include bark mulch, resin or even gravel. We noted the 1798 Memorial, the Macra Na Feirme Memorial and the World War I plaque as well as the Sun dial all of which add interest. These various buildings, including the Court House and White's Castle are of such importance along with the river and bridge that they should have special recognition and indeed if possible, the entire area should be pedestrianized. We realise that such a plan has many implications but in the present arrangement they lack sufficient emphasis. The large Heritage sign opposite the castle would benefit from a legend showing landmarks. The town park is an oasis of greenery with mature specimens of trees including evergreen oak (*Quercus ilex*), Sequoiadendron, pines and copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica purpurea*). The attractive playground was popular on the day of our visit. A low stone boundary wall allows a view to the park. Some weeds have established at its base and across the road. The railway station building was in good repair and the NCPS sign at the entrance needs cleaning. Opposite the station there is a nice car park. The rusty water tank near here takes from the positive impact. If the tank is to remain, can it be screened with some artwork? Full marks for the bi-lingual heritage signs. The well-kept cemetery has good specimen trees. The Church of Ireland is a great focal

point from Church Road. The RC church has an interesting modern design. The car park looked fine; some weeds at the entrance need attention. The Campus, Top and Topaz service stations were fine as was the Garda Station. Historical information on the wall at the canal is well done and very interesting. We also visited the Anglers' Remembrance Garden which is a pleasant facility. The Shrine with the best kept terrace award plaques was well maintained. Repair works are needed for the boundary wall at the Recreational Hall. The red brick church looked well as did the convent building. We noted the photographic display in the windows of the vacant shops in William Street. Well done on this effort

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and you have some very good examples, especially in the town centre. This adjudicator can remember when the trees were planted in Emily Square and it is great to see how well they have established. The original tree grids at the base have become dislodged and can present a trip hazard which is why we assumed that they were replaced by concrete. As mentioned above, it is essential that the concrete is removed in order to save the trees. The car park at Edmund Rice Square has trees which are not thriving. You may have to replace these with stronger specimens. When trees are established it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake. This is particularly noticeable in residential areas where it seems that residents are unaware of the problem. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible. In that regard, the floral displays on poles in Edmund Rice Square and other areas were admired. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container. In that regard, we advise that some containers near the canal banks be removed. If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. Herbaceous planting outside the cottage near the Grand Canal looks cheerful.

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

You have a rich natural area surrounding your community and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. The Barrow River with its fine mature trees was very appealing and the Grand Canal area looks nice; the willow trees add to the impact. We enjoyed the wall mural on the canal bank and we noted the boxes on trees in Emily Square. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Biodiversity is under threat globally and sadly Ireland is a part of this trend. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. List the plants and animals to be found in your natural environment and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This would be a very useful project for schools.

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

We note your activity in this category includes the green schools project but there is little information provided. Have any schools in your community won green flags other than the Tiny Tots pre-School? The energy free days are also noted as are the Mens' Sheds activity. In order to make more progress in this area and gain further marks it will be necessary to become more fully engaged in identifying what sustainable measures can be undertaken in your community to reduce, reuse and recycle. This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero waste society. Your town can play its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. Contact your waste contractors who can help with this. Try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature and. In regard to grassed areas, you can avoid collecting mowings by cutting the grass more frequently and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings. Other possibilities include the use of self-watering hanging baskets to help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. Other waste minimisation projects might include working with retailers to cut down on packaging, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, discouraging junk mail, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. The recycling bins at Edmund Rice Car Park need improved maintenance.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Under this heading there are many actions that communities take that become invisible once completed, for example, litter removal. In that regard, we note that you organise weekly litter patrols and have undertaken graffiti removal and repainting of bollards. The following is an account of situations where we encountered litter and untidiness in Athy. Signage in the town centre is a little cluttered. The car park off Meeting Lane had a small amount of litter. There were weeds in the gutter of houses in Barrow Quay. Railings on the bridge over the River Barrow need painting. In the area of the clothing bank there was general untidiness with discarded clothes, litter and some graffiti. The entrance poles to the right of the Garda Station were dirty and take from the otherwise pleasant area there. Graffiti was noted on the Tourism sign. Near the church, the Old Barn is in need of improvement and the DIY boundary and yard looks untidy. The large factory buildings on both sides of William Street are a visual challenge. The proposed mural on the gable wall at Boormalt should help to provide a more interesting vista.

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

We note that you have 30 active groups working to improve residential estates with support of an annual grants

scheme from the Council. The Best-Kept Estate Award scheme is a wonderful means of stimulating motivation among residential groups. Church Crescent Estate is well landscaped and has an impressive entrance. The open space and the houses are well-kept. In Aughaboura estate we admired the houses and gardens. An unnamed estate nearby has interesting open plan gardens. The containers on grass serve little purpose some dead trees should be removed. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible. In Graysland, King's Grove the unusual flat roofed houses and fine birch trees caught our attention. Coneyboro estate was clean and tidy, the tree stakes need to be checked to prevent damage to tree stems and we advise climbing against the wall to soften the hard appearance.

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

It is noted that the Council undertook significant improvement works at Leinster Street, Duke Street and William Street and that street markings have been upgraded. We also note that you are planning to tackle a number of back areas such as Meeting Lane, St. John's Lane and Garter Lane and wish you good luck in this work. The signs at the approach roads were generally good.