

# Tidy Towns Competition 2014

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castledermot** Ref: **367**  
County: **Kildare** Mark: **242**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **09/06/2014**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	29
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	33
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	26
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	8
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>242</b>

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

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2014 and we note that you have been a participant since 2006. Your committee of four people hold many meetings and you have the support of 10 other volunteers. You have links with residents, voluntary groups and receive support from local businesses and public bodies and a community employment scheme. Work with the local schools entails encouraging them to assist with the spring cleaning days. Your means of communication include emails/text, newsletters and public meetings. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with the projects highlighted. However, you have much to tell us about your town and one way of doing so is to prepare a good map which identifies the important buildings and areas that we should see. For example, the round tower and the old Abbey are not shown on your map and while the Abbey is quite visible, one has to go down side streets to find the round tower. Having a good map is worthwhile because it can be used with every year's application. We strongly advise the preparation of a three year plan to guide your forward planning and help prioritise projects for the years ahead. This can be helpful when you are seeking funding. In regard to documentation please avoid the use of plastic pockets and just bind all of the pages together. It is less cumbersome for the adjudicator when reading through the material. The available marks for this section is now extended to 60 to enable communities through their applications to provide a more detailed account of their area.

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

Castledermot has a fine heritage of old buildings such as the old Abbey and the Round Tower with St. James's Church and it is great to learn about the community's history from the information plaque. There are also has a number of more modern buildings and it is sad to see that some of the commercial properties such as the hotel are closed. Buildings which looked well were the Pharmacy and Doyle's Store and other houses in the town centre were in good condition with the exception of some unoccupied dwellings and premises which are closed. The site adjacent to the hotel takes significantly from the townscape as does the former Hennessy complex. We hope that improved business returns back to your town and restores these premises. We wondered if this decline in business was due to the M9 or the impact of the recession but were surprised with the high volume of traffic going through the town. Meanwhile, we wonder if any of your committee has explored implementing improvements such as painting murals on some of the boarded-up houses such as those opposite the Centra/Top service station. O'Neill's Pub looked well and we considered the stone walls opposite Horans as a nice feature that blends well with the Abbey ruins in the background. Horans Service Station and the Top and Centra stations were clean and tidy. The School House Restaurant looks well and the trees and shrubs here add to the setting. The church is well painted; we advise some softening of the large hard surface car park with some climbing plants against the boundary walls. The rusty roofed sheds opposite the church take from the scene. The Community Centre was clean and well painted. The SP Office is well presented as is the Mad Hatter's café. However, some shops are in need of repainting. The library is a fine building and the planting to the front adds to the scene. The sign needs cleaning. Buildings on both

sides are attractive and in good repair. The Dale's Lounge looks well and we enjoyed visiting the garden on the old pound site. It is wonderful for your community to have a sizeable open space such as the Fair Green; a nice peaceful area away from town traffic; we admired the seats. Colaiste Lorcan Community College is a fine building that is quite hidden behind the boundary wall. Inside the gates, the view of the old Abbey caught our attention but the stumps of recently removed trees present a poor approach. We enjoyed the murals on the walls further on. The newer Scoil Diarmada is a more open site and we noted the new footpaths along the route from the town centre. The car park is well screened with planting.

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

The main structural elements in the landscape are trees and you have many good examples in Castledermot. The avenue opposite the Round Tower is one of the finest examples anywhere and should be highlighted more in your submission. There is also a fine stand of trees on the boundary of the Fair Green. In planting new trees it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of newly planted trees is maintained free of weeds and grass and also flower beds to ensure early establishment. When trees are established it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake. The small open space beside O'Neills Pub is an attractive area and is well maintained. However, the supporting stakes need attention before they damage the tree stems and we noticed that grass is being dumped over the hedge. You can gain marks under sustainability if you consider a means of composting this material. The mown grass was more conspicuous in the lovely garden on the old pound site. This little garden which is tastefully developed and well maintained could easily be overlooked by visitors. Guidelines for plant containers are to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible. In that regard, we advise that the containers planted with flowers and sitting on the grass margin on the approach from Dublin do not enhance your community because they would be best placed in a more urban setting such as Market Square. The grass margin and hedge are fine on their own. The Market Square would benefit from having trees planted in the three empty circular areas enclosed with kerbing and an arrangement of floral displays (containers) would add more enhancements. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container at all. In that regard, we advise the removal of empty hanging baskets from the front of some premises. The use of permanent planting such as Herbaceous perennials is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. Containers of Begonias at the Community Centre will have no long term impact. It would be better to consider planting trees here.

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

Castledermot is surrounded by a rich landscape of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants with an accompanying fauna. The aim of this section is to raise awareness of the value of our natural environment and to encourage more development and promotion of nature. 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. We admired the uncut areas on the Fair Green where wildflowers are establishing. This adds important biodiversity to your community. Have you had any surveys completed on the flora yet? This is an activity that can easily be done with school children by having them identify and list the plants and animals to be found in your natural environment and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). The enclosed undeveloped corner site near the Top service station provides a fine display of wildflowers that could be better enjoyed if the surrounding fence was less dominant. Another area to consider is the stream at Abbeylands estate; instead of having it fenced from the public, consider improving access to the banks for people (including children) to enjoy the riverine environment.

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

This category is becoming more and more important and the available marks are now increased to 50 to highlight the need for communities to address the issues involved in tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. Well done on the collection of 48 bags of rubbish from around the town and for segregating it for recycling what was possible. We also note your "Seasons" shop for recycling clothes. There are a number of other measures that your town can take in regard to sustainability. Contact your waste contractors and 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, such as grass clippings. The former pound site and the small open near O'Brien's Pub are clean and well maintained but it would be good to stop the dumping of clippings on the site. You can avoid collecting mown grass by more frequent cutting and using mulching mowers which shred the clippings and facilitate faster decomposition. In regard to water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a 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. In response to an over use of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop as has been done in the Fair Green is an acceptable alternative. We noted a rather extensive evidence of chemical treatment of weeds in the Fair Green and suggest that perhaps you might consider reviewing your maintenance programme in that regard for the future. There is no problem in allowing vegetation to grow under established trees – it is young and establishing trees that are unable to compete with weeds. These activities will highlight the fact that you are focussing on this category and when you develop more projects in the future your marks will increase.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

The attractive welcome sign on the Carlow Road is in an unfortunate location because of the adjacent property which is in need of attention. There were some weeds and litter in and around the stone. We observed a number of unsightly plastic bags behind the entrance at Abbeylands Barnhill estate and torn signs at the entrance. To the side and rear of O'Neill's Pub there is a small car park adjacent to a small well maintained open space. A number of items here need attention. They include a potholed surface, a piece of broken wall pier lying beside the clothes bank, a gate needs painting and the adjacent wall is badly repaired with bricks instead of stone. We advise the removal of poles no longer needed for signs. A multitude of signs adds clutter and an old damaged sign for Castle Inn should be removed. A feature could be made of the old village pump at the stop sign; it is covered with debris. Some weeds were observed in kerbs and gullies in Main Street. Some finger post signs need cleaning. Litter bins and seats opposite the library look very well. An illegible sign beside the Top service station should be removed. On the approach from Dublin a number of items need attention. The welcome sign in sign is almost overgrown and needs to be repositioned. A rusty post holding other signs takes from the appearance. The heritage sign needs refreshment and an old pallet with some event sign should be removed. Consider planting a hedge on the opposite side of the road to help frame this approach to the town.

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

The Abbeylands Barnhill residential estate looks well. The houses are in good repair and maintenance is ongoing. The gardens would benefit from having some trees and or hedges planted to soften the appearance and if necessary some containers on the paved areas of gardens would add colour as well. We advise that attention be paid to the stakes on trees as they are causing damage to the tree stems. Stakes should be removed within 2 years of planting. Some dead trees should be removed and replaced. The entrance planting had some weeds and we noticed that they include sycamore trees which should be removed before they dominate. Screen walls within this estate could be softened with use of climbing plants such as ivy. The adjacent river seems to be separated from the estate by a fence when it could be made more accessible and be enjoyed by the residents. In Maple Close, the grass and trees look well maintained although some dead trees should be removed and it is important to check the ties and stakes here as well. The houses are in good condition; hedges add softening in some gardens and we noted the effort to enhance the area with plant containers. The open garden layout at St. John's estate is interesting and the rocks make it look different from other estates.

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

The approach from Carlow is quite attractive with both sides of the road well planted and the grass is well maintained. We advise that the old trees be checked as one in particular Ash appears in poor health. The Pride of Place sign is neatly done and we enjoyed seeing flowers thriving at the base of the hedge. The fence at the pitch and putt is in need of attention as it is unstable and rusting. The beech hedge opposite looks very well as indeed does the fine piers and gates of the entrance to private property. The road is well marked and has a good surface and the footpath is in good repair. Further on, the wall and railing boundary of Abbeylands/Barnhill estate looks very well. On the approach from Dublin, a fine farm entrance is a highlight. The containers here are out of place (mentioned above) but the hedge and grass margin looks well.