

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Robertstown** Ref: **981**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **246**
Category: **B** Date(s): **23/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	40
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	32
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	23
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	26
TOTAL MARK	450	246

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2013. We have noted that your committee of seven people hold many meetings throughout the year and have strong links with residents, voluntary groups and schools. You receive support from local businesses and public bodies. The use of Facebook, notice board newspaper etc., are your means of communication. The involvement with local schools is commendable. Many thanks for attaching maps of the area with some project locations marked for our attention and some photographs. We do encourage communities to aim for a 3 year plan because it is not possible to achieve everything in one year and it is good to aim for targets over a period of years.

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

Robertstown is a lovely setting with the canal being the main feature. It is interesting to learn about times past and how the canals contributed to our transport for commerce and tourism. It is sad to see such a fine and historical building such as the hotel being closed. We noted your attempts to keep it looking as best as possible by window displays. The information sign about the hotel is useful, some weed at the base take from this effort. In the adjacent car park we admired the murals painted on the panelled openings of the old house. Boats on the canal looked well. The nearby crash barrier needed painting. The village has some nice houses, which add great character to the streetscape. Buildings of note were Mullaneys and Dowlings and the Holiday Village. The Post office was fine but the adjacent building was weedy. The Garda Station building was fine and we admired the equestrian relief on the gable wall. The chain and bollards at the canal make good impact. On the bridge we admired the lights and baskets. However, we thought it would be better to render the wall with plaster or stone facing or just plant ivy at the base and allow it to cover the concrete blocks. The display of farm implements (outdoor museum) was noted. The thatched cottage and the former adjacent school looked well. The entrance wall to the GAA needs painting as do some rusty poles here as well. The car park was fine and we admired the planting at the entrance. The Green Flag flying proudly at the national school was noted. There were no weeds or litter to be seen here.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Trees are the main structural elements in the landscape and it is important that the types chosen are in scale with the buildings and are in harmony with your rural setting. Therefore, in your area we advise that native or naturalized species are more suitable than exotic species such as flowering cherries. For that reason, we suggest an ash, birch or maple tree would be more appropriate for Olive's way. In planting new trees it is best to use a single species on a road or street for uniformity as was done on the canal bank. Also, it is important to ensure that the base of new 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; this is a problem in residential estates as mentioned below. Guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible, for example hanging baskets which you have so well in many places. The use of permanent planting is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming and we note that you have taken this approach as for example with the planting opposite the hotel which was admired. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container and in this regard we advise the removal of an old timber plant container and a seat near the bridge. Picnic tables and seats were well used.

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

We note from the attached bat survey that four species were recorded and a high degree of activity of Daubenton's bat was associated with the presence of the Grand Canal. We note the 11 recommended measures including limiting the amount of light and avoidance of chemicals for weed control and the erection of bat boxes (on order). 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. 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?). We were impressed by the number of ducks on the canal moving in and out of the sunshine. The canal banks have natural vegetation which is appropriate and we noticed the bird house.

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. Actions noted under this heading include the use of recycled paper, mobile phone collections, segregation of material collected on clean-ups and awareness sessions in the school. Recycling bins are located at the school and the car park adjacent to the hotel. 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. 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. There appears to be an overuse of chemical weed killer and in that regard, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative in some cases. 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:

You have many actions listed under this heading including the collection of 40 bags of material collected on clean-up days. The chain and bollards do add a tidy appearance to the canal bank and the approach looked tidy so well done on getting the work done before the March deadline. The finger post sign for the Tourist Route needs cleaning and the Tourist sign also was dirty. Near the bridge, some broken seats should be replaced. Weeds at the kerb outside daybreak. The "duck and frog" litter bins are appealing and it seems are well used. Some litter seen at the recycling bins. Weeds and litter observed in residential estates are mentioned below.

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

The Moorings estate had a nice name stone, trees and open space. The houses and gardens were well maintained. There is a problem here with some stakes on trees which should be removed before they damage the tree stems. A small amount of litter in evidence. We suggest more greening in the gardens and softening of the entrance wall with plants as per the example of the wall opposite. A dead tree here should be removed. Graydon Manor has unusual houses. Trees are on the open space and in margins and we admired the boundary railings. In Lowtown Manor we noted hedges in the gardens and the trees are well established. There is scope for more trees in this estate and screen wall could be softened with climbing plants. Houses were fine but some weeds were noted at kerbs. In the Moorings, Annsborough Court and Lowtown Manor, we advise that the tree ties and supporting stakes be checked. Stakes should not be required after two years and should be removed to prevent the ties from causing damage to tree stems. In St. Bridget's Terrace, the grass was well maintained; we admired the birch trees here and the floral displays on some houses. The seat needs painting and there were some kerbside weeds. Houses were fine in Annsborough Court but some weeds at the kerbs and in planted areas take from the impact.

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

Robertstown surprises because the centre looks so different from most towns. This is due mainly to the impact of the Grand Canal. In general, the roads and footpaths are in good conditions with minor issues only been observed. The tourist signs were clean, the grass was maintained and we saw a small amount of litter. Speed limit signs were dirty

