

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Straffan** Ref: **385**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **313**
Category: **C** Date(s): **13/06/2014**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2014 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning | 60 | 45 |
| Built Environment and Streetscape | 50 | 38 |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces | 50 | 38 |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities | 50 | 39 |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50 | 13 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 65 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 36 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 39 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 313 |

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2014. We have noted that your committee of eight people swells to 15 when you undertake projects on the ground. Your meetings are held in relation to stages of the competition to review progress and to implement the programme. You have many links with residents, voluntary groups and schools and receive support from local businesses and public bodies and your means of communication include local media, print and radio. The involvement with the local school is commendable and congratulations to them on their success in the Green School Programme. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with project locations marked for our attention and including photographs in the documentation. Thank you for attaching the 3 year plan.

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

You have done a great job on maintaining the village atmosphere in Straffan. Straffan Inn was well painted and the car park was neat and tidy. The large white plant containers are functioning as bollards or dividers for car parking. It would be better to plant trees in permanent positions and remove the white containers. Opposite the Straffan Inn, we admired the street lights and hanging baskets. The small park opposite the church is a gem in the town centre with its fine trees and well maintained grass surrounded with a low stone wall. We noted that the Catholic Church was painted since last year. The grotto and grounds looked well and no evidence of litter. From here to the Post Office, we admired a number of buildings including the fine stone built former barracks and the newer shop units adjacent. In particular, Straffan Cottage with its well planted cottage garden caught our eye. The Post Office/shop looked well; the adjacent house had some weeds in the gutter. Opposite the Post Office, the buildings (former Dispensary) on Boreen Road were enhanced with hanging baskets. The Church of Ireland is an imposing building on the corner of Boreen Road and the well-maintained grounds are enclosed with a stone wall boundary and hawthorn hedge all of which looked well. The GAA entrance had large evergreen trees growing outside the wall on the Ardrass Road which make a strong impact. The bus stop on New Road was painted but the roof needs cleaning. The K Club is a valuable resource for Straffan and surrounding area in many ways, especially for its interesting landscape with fine tree specimens such as the Cedar tree outside the entrance. We noted work ongoing at the Community Centre.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

We admired the mature trees on New Road at the church and on the open space opposite. These are significant features in the village and with the buildings, add important character to the streetscape. The line of lime trees on the approach from Barberstown is most impressive and is exactly the type of tree planting that should be done to enhance roads. It is great that they are well established. We noted the new trees on the corner of Boreen Road

and suggest that they will have difficulty in establishing because of the shade from adjacent trees. It occurs to us that you have other sites such as the grounds of the church of Ireland where new trees would make better impact and have a better chance of establishing. This could be done without interfering with the car boot sales positions. When trees are established it is important to remove the stakes as the stems can get damaged from the ties or stake. This is an issue in some residential estates mentioned below. Ivy in Yew trees in the cemetery grounds needs to be controlled to prevent it from taking over the tree. Stone walls in the village have wonderful character and it is not necessary to place plant containers in these locations. An exception would be where the containers are placed at corners such as in the small feature which we admired across from the church. Our attention was drawn to the empty position at the wall base along the road which perhaps had flowers planted in the past. It is suggested that replanting this empty position would be more appropriate than placing a container in some other position. Empty or poorly planted containers are less effective than no plant container. In that regard, the half barrel plant containers near the church need painting. However, we wonder if they are even needed at this location. You have done so much to enhance the village with plants and flowers that it may be time for you to reflect on which ones achieve the greatest impact. The use of permanent planting is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming. On Station Road beside the Post Office we admired the planting scheme with Begonias and shrubs. The bed of Geraniums at an entrance to a private house was impressive. Baskets on walls on New Road were very good. Flower bed with Begonias on edge looked well on New Road. We admired the planting outside Scoil Bhríde. A dead tree here needs removal. The planting opposite the school is overgrown and is in need of some pruning to retain the shrubs planted there before they are covered with low branches of the trees.

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

You are surrounded with a rich natural area including the grounds of the K Club where we note the unique trees are labelled and these can be discovered with the garden walk guide leaflet. The Butterfly Farm is an asset that contributes to awareness of wildlife. The Treasure Hunt for wildlife as well as the "Bat Talk and Walk" and the frog spawn activities are appropriate and we hope the participants found them enjoyable. It is important to promote an awareness of habitats as 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?). Good luck to teachers and pupils on their biodiversity theme Green Flag. The use of hawthorn as a boundary hedging is a good choice for wildlife.

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

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. We note your estimate of 100 tonnes of glass and cans been recycled from within your community over the past three years. The success of segregation of litter in the school is also noted. Scoil Bhríde was proudly flying its Green Flag. It is good that you have approached the business community for support in recycling; have you sought information from them on volumes of material recycled? We have also noted the clothes recycling activities. There are a number of other measures that your town can take in regard to sustainability. 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. We note from your submission that this is the policy that you have adopted. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. 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:

Your work evenings on Tuesdays and Saturdays are wonderful efforts to maintain Straffan clean and tidy and we note that this includes emptying litter bins. The "adopt an area" is a good scheme which works well in other communities as it seems to do for you as well. A few weeds at the GAA entrance which spoiled the nice stone wall and clean gate. The Riding School building visible from the entrance would benefit from a fresh coat of paint and some weeds inside the gate need attention. The entrance piers at the K Club need cleaning.

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

Individual houses in Straffan village are well maintained. In Straffan Gate estate, the houses are in good condition with plenty of trees. Unfortunately, some overgrown shrubs and weeds spoil the effect. Check supporting stakes and remove those which are no longer needed before they cause damage to tree stems. Planting of hedges, trees or shrubs in the gardens would help to soften the hardness of the buildings. Private dwellings on the Ardrass Road looked well and the gardens well maintained. Coarsemoor is an estate of well-maintained houses. The entrance stone was enhanced with beautiful planting. The bed to the side of #1103 caught our eye. The small plant containers at the entrance make little impact and the flower bed under the canopy of trees is too shaded requiring too much watering. The Beeches is a lovely estate. We were taken with the hornbeam specimens here and the

hedges in gardens made very good impact. The grass was well maintained. A dead tree should be removed. There is scope for more trees on the open space. Barton Grange estate has fine houses enhanced with street trees. The tree stakes here need to be removed before they cause damage to the tree stems. The same comment applies to an unnamed estate opposite where we advise the erection of a name stone.

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

The approach from Maynooth is exceptional and we admired the newly planted roundabout at Barberstown Cross. We question the use of plant containers on the roundabout when it should be possible to plant directly into the ground. Some of the established planting of Potentilla and Roses looked well but a problem of weeds is developing, especially briars and sycamore which in time can take over the area. The "Straffan" sign built into the wall looked very well. The entrance to Barberstown Castle had nice stone piers and stone walls and very ornamental gates. And on the opposite side of the road, the farm gates also looked well. The hawthorn hedge on this stretch is in good condition and forms an appropriate boundary using native species and attracts wildlife. The line of lime trees from here to the village form a stately entrance. No evidence of litter. On the Ardrass Road, wild flowers on the road margin guided us to the Steam Museum which has a lovely entrance and gate. The 50 and 60 kph signs further on were dirty. We visited the AFC site and noted the other entrance to the Steam Museum which seems unused. This is in need of improvement. Reflecting bollards in the grass near the Riding School need attention. Finger post signs throughout Straffan are an important feature. The trees, grass and wall along Station Road form a lovely approach. The wall opposite the K Club grounds is in need of repair.