

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Abbeyleix** Ref: **302**
County: **Laois** Mark: **306**
Category: **C** Date(s): **02/07/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	43
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40
TOTAL MARK	450	306

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

I note you have 10 members in your committee and you meet formally as a group in April and discuss issues at the clean ups on Monday and Tuesday evenings. We note you are trying to get the young people involved and this could be very helpful as then they could have a greater appreciation of the value of the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition. You are working well with the local bodies and agencies, and it is good to hear that Laois County Council is very supportive of your work. The local people are well informed of your activities. It is positive to have these good connections with the schools, and we congratulate them on their successes in the green flag initiatives. You have put in a considerable amount of time and effort to produce this entry, and this is appreciated, but could I please suggest that you could cut back on the amount of material for the adjudicator as important information could accidentally be overlooked in all the material supplied. You are very welcome to the competition and have a good approach to it

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

There is a lovely built environment in Abbeyleix with splendid residences in between good quality commercial places. One is immediately impressed with the tall elegant Electric Light poles and the finger signposts that give a distinctive flavour to the town. The square is interesting where the Market House stands out, it is a landmark building in this part of County Laois; and it is great to see it used today as your library. Sitting in the polished marble seat there is interesting scenery in this well presented area. Bergins is beautiful with the attractive mural and the plough is a good reminder of the tillage tradition of the county. My personal choice of other shops were Mooneys, Capri Grill, Vincents, Hair studio and the Post Office, but there are other outstanding presentations as well. The Catholic Church is an impressive structure where the beautiful clock reminds us of the time of day, and there is very good landscaping, car parking facilities, and the graveyard at the back is splendid. It is delightful to see the older historical buildings so well presented after all the years and The Heritage building is a good example of this plus Abbeyleix South National School and of course the splendid Church of Ireland and then there is the District Hospital. Fr Breen Park is an excellent facility for the district and it is maintained to a high standard. Walking along another street we enjoy very good presentations where McEvoy's, Ladies and Gents hairdressers, Leinster House, Own Designs Boutique and Clelands catch the eye. Scoil Mhuire is well presented on the Ballyroan road. The fountain is an attractive historical feature.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

I was most impressed with the splendid landscaping adding freshness and colour in lots of parts of the town. Young and mature trees are delightful all over Abbeyleix. At the entrances to the town we enjoy nice shrubberies with tree lined well tender grass margins, and the Portlaoise road sets a high standard that is maintained throughout. The

variety of the shrubs and flowers in different locations make for picturesque settings. Dove House is wonderful with great work being done there and the Sensory Gardens are excellent in every way. It was delightful to spend some time there amongst your people. I loved a small green with very nice mature trees, and the commemorative stone in honour of Jimmy Maher 2006 erected by Abbeyleix Tidy Towns. Hanging baskets and window boxes of flowers are present in many shops and houses and these added to your great Tidy Towns presentations make for picturesque scenery.

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

I read a lot of the support material about the bog project and eagerly looked forward to a walk there, but was taken aback to find that there is quite a long walk to get to the boardwalk, as a local man told me it was around a mile down the path. I was pleasantly surprised when Emma Seale unexpectedly arrived to do some work there and she very kindly drove me down all the way, explaining as we went along that this pathway was once a railway line. We admired a few signs in different places and Emma explained that these signs will shortly be upgraded and she also told me that the total distance down is 1450 metres, and you are putting in rest benches every 200 metres. We walked along the boardwalk that goes 250 metres into the high bog and saw some special scenery of typical bog land with a backdrop of forestry and farmland, where there were copious amounts of heather and bog cotton. Back safely by the roadside I have great memories of this venture and will return especially when the rest benches are in place. I walked in the "footsteps" of energetic and imaginative people where great leadership is shown. You have more exciting plans for this venture and I wish you well for the future.

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

You have listed an impressive amount of initiatives that are ongoing in Abbeyleix which caters for the waste responsibly, and firstly we salute the children for their success in the green flag programmes. Producing 560 litres of apple juice from apples that could have ended up going rotten is commendable. Using LED lights as opposed to 60 watt bulbs is the way forward, and we see the brown bin is now used to collect compostable waste. It is interesting to find that 33.5 tonnes of recyclables are going through the recycling area / bottle bank. The EU Waste Management Hierarchy is elimination, reduction, reuse, recycle and there are many ways of doing all of this. Carrying out some sort of waste awareness survey or distributing a questionnaire would give people a starting point in terms of waste prevention. Groups can take many steps to reduce the level of resources used and become more efficient at using materials, while at the same time reducing waste generation. Bulk buying and avoiding disposable products, using local libraries and repairing goods are all ways of being more resource efficient. With the children involved in the excellent green schools initiatives we can study what they are doing in the schools and carry it forward ourselves. All the trees have huge amounts of leaves in the autumn / winter and most of this could be collected and composted. Composting is the way forward and you could further educate the people on how best to do this, by for instance, holding a workshop that demonstrates that to achieve the best results we must mix green kitchen waste with brown waste like hedge clippings, and also by turning it occasionally; more information is available on this from the county council or on stopfoodwaste.ie. Compost reduces the amount of waste going to landfill, and produces good material for the vegetable and flower gardens, plus it cuts down on spending money on such like material.

The collection of scrap metal from householders such as old steel beds, wheelbarrows, bicycles, gates, galvanised iron etc and bringing it to central point could earn money for your activities as there are plenty registered dealers in scrap metal who could buy it from you, and reduce the risk of it being thrown in ditches etc. This latter initiative could maybe get the teenagers involved.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There is great commitment shown whereby two volunteers do a daily litter pick. The secluded bog is a tempting place for some people to dump material and good to find that you have a person keeping a watchful eye for "strikes" on dumping. Any dumping should be brought to the notice of the environment section of the County Council, by firstly leaving it intact and not disturbed, take a photograph of it and make a formal complaint to the council giving them the photograph; they then could follow up on the complaint and actually take away the offending material where they could later go through it, and if they find evidence they then can prosecute the culprit. All of this follow up does not involve you in any way, and this avoids embarrassing situations. After leaving the wood I saw the good work you did to remove the graffiti from the old railway bridge.

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

The children's playground is a great facility for the town, and nice to see the young people playing there on a summer's day. I visited the estates and it is pleasing to report that there is a high standard set by the resident's associations. I note your remarks about De Vesci Hill and we look forward to this estate being fully occupied and maintained in a satisfactory manner. The attention paid to proper landscaping is great and for instance we admired the young beech hedge at Grallow Wood Estate. In the town Preston House sets a high standard and many other town houses are in great condition. The standard of presentation of the houses on the approach road are most impressive, and the houses around Tír na nÓg on the Dublin road are beautiful.

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

Road signage is good with clean, clear and distance signposts, and the small finger signs in the town are attractive in their own right as well as pointing us in the right direction. Cycle lanes are helpful for the cyclists and interesting to find that one stretches all the way to Durrow. The traffic lights in the middle of the town makes sure that traffic

passes through in an orderly fashion.