

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Feakle** Ref: **798**
County: **Clare** Mark: **252**
Category: **A** Date(s): **14/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	36
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	22	23
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	29
TOTAL MARK	450	244	252

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you Feakle TidyTowns for your entry into the 2015 National TidyTowns competition. Your entry form is clear, precise and accompanied with an easy-to follow map. Feakle has certainly achieved a lot and has galvanised the community to take on board long-term actions for the benefit of the whole community. Well done on your links with the GAA, School, Parish and all the statutory support bodies. Your long-term plan was inspected and you have detailed a comprehensive range of projects to be completed over the next four years. It may help to state in which year you want to achieve each action? How was the plan developed? Did the public input into this via the committee members?

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

The streetscape of Feakle presented very nicely. The muted colours of the school looked very well, as did the community centre. On the Main Street (L4062) there is indeed, in your own words, a 'remarkable' stone building that reflects the built heritage of Feakle. Your work on the rebuilding of the stone walls nearby is commended.

It was so lovely to see Loughlann's Youth Hostel with its nice, simple window displays in the middle of Feakle bringing tourists to this lovely part of Clare. Moloney's public house had a nice traditional shop front and the mechanisms were still in place here for its wonderful, sliding wooden doors. Bohan's public house was well presented and it was good to see the 'butt-bin' in use here.

There were a large number of clients enjoying the good weather outside Pepper's bar. Perhaps parking could be encouraged at the rear of Pepper's as it is such a nice spot? The Post Office building was very nicely presented with lovely railings in place and with the clever use of paint to highlight the relief of the plasterwork here.

The proposed map would look well at the cottage. On adjudication day neither this nor the cleaning of the memorial plaque had been completed so be sure to include these actions in next year's adjudication form so you can be credited for this work.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You have wonderful pockets of landscaping through Feakle. Your adjudicator's favourite spot was by the Mill stream off the Main Street with the '1882' engraved stone. The hanging basket brackets no longer used here could be removed. Your adjudicator had concerns about the planting of what appears to be *Rhododendron ponticum* near here. This colourful evergreen shrub is highly invasive, spreads rapidly to the detriment of other plants and supports little wildlife. Although in this village area it is likely to be managed and controlled, the seeds are very easily spread

and could cause major problems Feakle's natural habitats.

The Fair Green is another attractive facility – do you have public events here? By Moloney's public house there was a nicely landscaped bed with climbers at the rear providing year-round structure which is where the competition is moving in order to be more sustainable and to save money. Thus the more regimented planting scheme in the roadside bed here with begonias could possibly be changed in the longer term. Please do not use slug pellets as the introduction of such chemicals into the environment should not be encouraged.

The landscaped embankment by the Ballinahinch Road looked very well with lovely shrubs showing good examples of sustainable planting schemes. Planted containers at the school were nice. Your long-term plan for the provision of a community garden will look well.

The painting of the field gate opposite the school could help instil a sense of place within Feakle. The sleepers and landscaped beds opposite the school were also very nicely presented. The new beech hedging looked very pleasant so well done to the volunteers who helped to plant this. The refurbished well on the Tulla Road and was visited and is a lovely spot in Feakle. On adjudication day there was some loose mortar that simply needed to be brushed-up on the steps here.

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

The school has carried out a habitat maps and detailed wildlife found through Feakle. This should be of benefit to the community and highlight areas where you can link habitats together or where you can enhance them. How is the information shared across the wider Feakle community? You state that you will work with 'Irish seedsavers' - the provision of native seed stock into your community will be commendable. Some Japanese knotweed was spotted growing on the Gort Road on a site at the rear of Pepper's Public House. This is a highly invasive plant that can grow through concrete and damages infrastructure. In the UK you cannot get a mortgage on a property if it is growing in the grounds, and it has held back the Luas works in Dublin by over 18 months. One small fragment of this plant's root is enough for a new plant to form. As it was imported from Japan, where it grows on the side of Volcanoes, it cannot be destroyed by burning or composting. You should read www.invasivespeciesireland.com for advice.

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

The introduction of push-taps, sensor lights, low-energy light bulbs, and increased insulation will reduce energy costs and usage at the Community Centre. We liked the use of the 'stop and hop' scheme to alleviate with parking issues at the school. Using your own composts in your planting schemes, and harvesting rain-water at the school all help you gain marks in this category of the competition.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

There is a lot of signage at the entrance to the sewage works. Well done on not using weed killer in most places but watch the use of weed killer along the base of stone walls. It is suggested that litter volunteers are asked to hand-pull weeds where possible. There was a lot of warning reflective tape wrapped around the telegraph post that blocks the entrance to the GAA pitch. The community should lobby with ESB to have this road-safety hazard relocated.

The plastering and capping of the GAA boundary wall looked very well especially as you can see this clearly the Tulla Road. The GAA carpark area appeared unfinished. Some building materials were stored here for some of the works carried out on the boundary wall. Once this work is completed, the tidying of the car park will make a difference also. The signpost near the school had some rust on the post itself that could be tidied up. Overhead wiring is an issue in Feakle and perhaps this should be considered as part of the long-term plan for the village. It was good to see a clean, not-rusty, sewage vent pipe at the top of the village. The bottle banks looked well and the new concrete plinth here helped with the presentation of this area.

There was some dog waste on the Main Street and you plan to make the playground free of dog-waste. Perhaps there could be a 'dog-waste' awareness day where temporary signs are erected and free-dog waste bags are distributed by the local school children?

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

The housing estate by the GAA pitch looked well, though no name plate was noticed here and planters at the top of this estate were nicely presented. There were a couple of planters positioned at the turning circle at the bottom of the estate here. They are not needed here as it is a nice rural area, and were not planted on adjudication day. So it is suggested that they are relocated where they can enhance an area that needs some attention.

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

The engraved limestone entrance signs looked very well. At the T-junction above the playground onto the Main Street you face a lovely set of wrought iron gates and their enhancement would make a lovely addition to Feakle. Your Heritage Officer should be able to provide advice on how to best do this. There are many other gates that could also be enhanced through Feakle in this regard, indeed your adjudicator has never seen so many of these still in place in one community. Maybe you could apply for a conservation grant for all of them to be appropriately restored?

The upgraded pavement all along the top road looked very well. Due to the long-extended nature of Feakle perhaps the field gates along the road could be painted the one colour to demonstrate that you are part of the one community?

Concluding Remarks:

Feakle is in a wonderful part of Clare. It was a delight to explore Feakle and see swallows on the wires, to hear bird singing and to enjoy the local heritage. You have a real pride in your community that is clearly demonstrated by the projects achieved and the high presentation of buildings throughout the village. Well done.