

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Straffan**

Ref: **385**

County: **Kildare**

Mark: **317**

Category: **C**

Date(s): **24/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45	46
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	39	40
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>313</b>	<b>317</b>

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

Many thanks for your entry in this year's Tidy Towns Competition. Congratulations on and thank you for four decades of involvement with Tidy Towns. It would be clear to the most casual visitor how well-placed your efforts and involvement have been.

Thank you for a most complete entry form and supporting material. In fact, congratulations on a lovely submission this year, replete with photographs of such quality that they could grace a calendar - perhaps they do! Pictures tell their own story and yours tell of great effort and pride which have resulted in a lovely environment for your residents and visitors. Thank you for the copy of the ecological survey by Mullen et al and once more the superb pictures. Thank you for the clear and concise plan. It is suggested though that a more detailed plan might serve you better. You submitted a number of maps of varying kinds. None had the road names on them, leaving the adjudicator to work out what to call them. The aerial had a key but this was for estates only and unfortunately these weren't marked on the stickers on photo. The key and stickers on Map No. 3 were excellent. Thank you. The adjudicator suggests that you get one of your more artistic members to draw a simple sketch map and copy this. You may then write upon it (handwritten is fine) any features, projects landmarks etc. that you wish (but especially road and street names). The stickers system is a good one. You communicate well among your own village and district but also with the various organisations you list. This is crucial. You detail very good engagement with the schools. This is vital too. You told us the age of your least young member but what about the least old? Please tell us next year about the young people who are on your committee. Well done on following up on the comments of last year's adjudicator. We make these to encourage such progress.

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

Many thanks for your brief description of the history of your wonderful built environment. The work at the church was noted. The necessary works at the community hall wasn't seen of course but please update us next year on how the fundraising was achieved and we'll be able to see the results, all going well.

The Post Office / shop / petrol station looked very well on adjudication day. The forecourt area was spotless. The Butcher's shop adjacent was just as clean and neat. The Straffan Inn looked bright and clean. The community centre was very much in use on the day with a party going on! The exterior looked well and the adjudicator wonders how much work is needed here when viewing the figure quoted in your entry form. Perhaps in next year's entry you might explain the project in more detail. The Church of Ireland church is one of your highlights but the car-boot sale sign really distracts one from this. It must too be said that the planting in the church grounds was disappointing when compared to the standard of the village as a whole. The lich gate of the church yard was very much admired for its structure and the standard of care.

The two empty retail units have been kept up extremely well. It is hoped that these may be occupied soon.

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

This adjudicator would echo the comments on the many fine trees of Straffan made in last year's report. Well done for taking action on some of these where applicable. The new flower bed at your 'winning sign' looks sharp and contemporary - well-placed beside the modern estate here. The wooden planters were clean and looked really well on the day. There is gorgeous name stone planting at Coarsemoor and there is some very impressive cypress topiary here.

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

The ecological study is from 2010 and indeed you should really try to obtain a follow-up work to verify the status quo. Habitats, especially when shared with human habitation can change remarkably in 5 years and there may well be new pressures, priorities or indeed opportunities for wildlife and its habitats around Straffan.

Please be advised that the release of non-native bird species such as pheasants or ducks will not attract any points although the maintenance of the habitats which support these (e.g. broadleaved woodland, clean watercourses) may well do so. Well done on your wildlife survey efforts including the common frog and bat walk n talk. The training in bat conservation is an excellent initiative. Make sure to map the position of all birdboxes and keep a log of their annual inspection and maintenance.

The adjudicator greatly applauds your approach of one project properly undertaken per year. The school will no doubt have several biodiversity accomplishments to add to the community's overall contribution to conservation.

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

It is acknowledged that this category is often one that gives groups most challenges. You are therefore advised to consult the comprehensive document on this category that was issued by the Tidy Towns Unit earlier this year. In this you will find a detailed description of the requirements, targets and aspirations of the category as well as dozens of project ideas. It doesn't seem that you are short of initiatives though. The rainwater collectors is an excellent example. The K Club updates too add a business dimension. Please be advised that recycling - even recycling of segregated litter isn't the core focus here and shouldn't appear so often in your entry.

How were energy savings introduced into the community centre renovations? Can passive or renewable energy be incorporated here as an example for the community to follow? The Stop Food Waste initiatives are an excellent idea and you are strongly encouraged to undertake these.

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

Well done on your very many litter-picking efforts. It's great that you have sponsorship for waste disposal but does Kildare County Council have a role in this too? You might explain this if so. Fly-tipping is indeed a problem in many areas and you are to be thanked for your role in dealing with its consequences. The Adopt an Area approach you have wisely pursued is very appropriate. One of the speed limit signs on the Boreen Road is damaged, as is the name sign here. Another speed limit sign is askew. The litterbins look very well maintained. The adjudicator wonders if you really need this many. Similarly the anti-dog litter signage. Perhaps you might reassess this in time. The litterbins attached to the wall in the seated area in front of Bawnogues really don't look good.

It was noted that road signs had been cleaned and painted, as had the bollards and farm gates on Station Road. Could you see if you could paint all of the gates black? It would add to the overall effect.

You refer to WEEE recycling again here. Although its link to littering is acknowledged, you are advised to avoid duplication of entry material. Your hand-on attitude to weed control is greatly admired. This is the way forward.

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

It is acknowledged that you have taken action on the key recommendations of last year's adjudicator, well done. With regard to the name sign for Bawnogues, this would not be an excessive cost and the residents here should well be able to take on this cost. The adjudicator wasn't sure what was meant by the reference to the swelling on the Ardrass Road. Are the uncut areas at the green for a wildlife project? They were more than half full of non-native species. Perhaps you could clarify this, please. The anti dog litter sign on the stone wall nearby detracts a little from the streetscape. The birch trees here are lovely and the grass is so well-cut. The barrel in this corner looks poor.

Straffan Gate is a very pleasant little estate. The shrubs inside the estate are in need of some pruning. The tree-planting here is of good quality. The little cul-de-sac opposite Coarsemoore has a number of well-filled planters and some lovely gardens but one of these is simply stunning. The lavender, alium, vegetable plots and new beech hedgerow looked fantastic. The only rival seen on the day was Straffan Cottage's superb front garden.

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

While there are no doubt arguments to be made on each side for and against the planters at the roundabout and

there is also a degree of subjectivity at play, this adjudicator can see your point on why planting might be difficult here. However, the opinion of last year's adjudicator is still valid and planting in the ground, where practicable is indeed the preferred option. It looks well nonetheless. The bridge repairs were noted. Local authority funding in all sectors has been cut back so bear with the County Council while still maintaining your good communication with the relevant officials. Your good work in monitoring the state of roads and your splendid walls is a vital service you carry out for the good of all. The black and white street name signs were admired.

The village enjoys gorgeous approaches thanks to the stone walls and mature trees. Station Road was probably the adjudicator's favourite. The gates of Straffan GAA Club are in need of painting. There is an abandoned road works sign and sandbag here too. The roadside verges are really well-cut. A farm gate on the Maynooth Road could be painted. The approach road from the north has some lovely mature trees which include sycamore, horse chestnut, hawthorn and elder. The adjudicator was delighted to see so many cyclists enjoying the rural roads and scenery on the fine evening of adjudication day.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Well done on a really lovely entry which reflects the great effort you've put in over the year. Congratulations on all your achievements to date.