

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Naas** Ref: **382**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **318**
Category: **G** Date(s): **10/07/2016**
04/08/2016

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2015 | Mark Awarded 2016 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning | 60 | 50 | 50 |
| Built Environment and Streetscape | 50 | 42 | 42 |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces | 50 | 44 | 44 |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities | 50 | 41 | 41 |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50 | 14 | 17 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 53 | 53 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 37 | 37 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 33 | 34 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 314 | 318 |

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Naas is welcome back to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2016 – we note your involvement since 1958! Congratulations on your recent gold medal achievement – this is helping you to further increase momentum and strive for even higher standards. One of the positive results has been the increase in volunteers from 70 to 129 – well done! You have a diverse group of people. Your active committee of 12 members has been busy. Thank you for comprehensive entry form – clearly laid out with helpful photos. It was a little difficult to pinpoint where your numbered projects referred to on the maps as not all the roads were named. One suggestion for the central part of town is to use a tourist street map and to superimpose stickers on it? You have established strong links with local clubs, community groups and businesses that in the main support your efforts. We read with interest of your designation as age-friendly town. Thank you for telling that your followers on Facebook increased by almost 200! We would be interested in hearing next time on the impact of your new twitter account. Your expanded Tus scheme helps you with ongoing maintenance projects. You also have good support from Kildare Co Co. Thank you for submitting your 3 Year Plan – please put a timeframe on the title. You are making tangible improvements in Naas and bringing all sectors of the community together. Keep up the good work!

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

Some of items here would be more relevant to the 'Tidiness' category – redundant poles, inappropriate signage, graffiti, undergrounding of cables. Have a look at the blue text under the category headings to remind you of what information is being asked for. Naas has a mix of attractive and not so attractive shopfronts. Initiatives such as your 'best shopfront' award are encouraging shop owners to paint their premises and tidy up the façade. Hopefully more will come on board. You are in close contact with owners and Kildare Co Co with relation to derelict buildings – we are glad to note that some progress is being made. The sensitive renovation of Gogarty's house overlooking the harbour is one such success story – credit to the owners here. Well done to the volunteers who have painted derelict buildings in an attempt to spruce them up. The library isn't great compared to the lovely surrounds at the harbour area. The Youth Services building looks fresh. Naas has some buildings of heritage interest such as the Banks, Daly's Pharmacy and Avanti Language School. The Credit Union looks fresh; however the banner detracts a little. Teahan Optometrists looked well as did Naas Town Hall and McDonalds. The Harbour Hotel sign is missing a letter. The sculpture and formal planting was admired nearby. Other buildings that caught the eye included Il Fico restaurant, Geraldine Gillice Solicitors, the Barbers, Kavanagh's pub, Maharajah Restaurant and the adjacent Fox's. The lovely Presbyterian church was another highlight.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Selecting a sub-committee to focus on this category is a good idea and some good decisions have already been made. The new ivy near the Topaz is going well and will provide good screening here. Well done to the Church maintenance group for the lovely presentation on the Sallins road. St. Corban's cemetery is beautifully maintained – we admired the lovely little house inside the entrance. At the restored well, you have tackled Japanese knotweed and planted a stunning willow fence. We look forward to seeing your other plans for this area come to fruition. The 'Failte go Naas' bed near the Maxol looks very well as does the roadside stretch opposite. Flower displays at the John Devoy statue enhance this attractive corner. The entrance to St. Mary's College contains a lovely mix of planting. Flower displays at key areas in the town centre bring focus and colour, for example the tiered flower displays outside the court house. Hanging baskets at GG's of Naas require attention. Fake hanging 'plants' are visually pleasing to this adjudicator. There is potential to enhance the green area opposite the Harbour Hotel.

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

As you are taking on quite a large area, you have a variety of habitats and places of interest in and around Naas. The quality of your submission is impressive – we admire the way you are evolving projects year on year based on your previous research and . We positively note that you have a committee member dedicated to this category. He has been working closely with Birdwatch Ireland on various projects including the monitoring of your many bird boxes. Well done to the students of CBS for their assistance in setting up the nest box with inbuilt camera – a wonderful way of engaging your younger people about wildlife on their doorstep. You also engage closely with Waterways Ireland regarding the upkeep of your canal and inland streams. Your contact with the local beaver group led to them making bird feeders from recycled materials. Purchasing wildlife cameras for your volunteers is an innovative idea – we look forward to updates. Your planting of 300 native trees this year is an impressive record. The new tree trail encourages young and old to walk this area while at the same time learning about their local trees. Your ongoing bat monitoring is noted. Another impressive project is the Tidy Towns setting up its very own beehive, harvesting honey and educating the school children about the importance of bees. We commend Naas CBS for being the first school in Ireland to have such a project within school grounds. We look forward to seeing your species list, following your recent habitat survey carried out in the de Burgh Oldtown Garden Estate.

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

You have certainly embraced this category this year and have implemented some impressive initiatives. Well done for recruiting a volunteer with expertise in this area. Your surveys of both businesses and householders show up some interesting results and provide you with a baseline for your awareness campaign. You have pushed the food waste issue and both St Mary's and CBS Boys have been quick to take up the challenge in their own individual ways. The 'food rescue' competition is a great way of raising awareness among our younger chefs and making this an annual competition will greatly help in highlighting the issue. Well done to the cub scouts for playing their part also. We impressed at the way you get awareness mileage from any initiative such as your Food Waste slot on Kildare FM and your clever use of social media. Your Wild Food Festival is another great way of showcasing your initiatives and further raising awareness. Your new cargo bike is a novel way of promoting sustainable transport – no doubt it has received much attention!

Well done for taking such strides in relation to your summer programme – a combination of reduced planters and more efficient use of water. Raising awareness of your charity shops as being an example of Reuse is also commended. Good news also that additional bike stands have been installed – to further encourage people to take the bike and leave the car at home. Your ongoing recycling initiatives are noted. An excellent submission – well done to all involved.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are well organised in terms of your litter picking rotas – well done to your 'clean up teams' who not only litter pick but have wider duties such as weed control, sweeping, cleaning of bins and removal of surplus signage. Your 'text alert' system is effectively to communicate litter problems so that they can be dealt with quickly. You also encourage residents to use the Kildare Co Co 'Fix your street' text alert. Your hi vis jackets and obvious signage ensures that people are aware of your voluntary efforts. You are segregating collected materials for recycling. Your communications campaign is excellent. There was minor littering in some areas so keep up the strong campaign (Chapel Lane, near Topaz Sallins Rd, Dublin Rd, Tesco Metro). Your Halloween campaign is commended as are your ongoing efforts to tackle graffiti. You acknowledge the strong support of Kildare Co Co in tackling this category.

You have made good efforts to remove redundant poles, in conjunction with Kildare Co Co. In at least three areas, railings have been painted to give a tidier impression. You have also been working hard to remove unlicensed signage. We are delighted to see from your photos that you have succeeded in having some electrical wires on South Main St placed underground. A redundant pole was observed on Dublin Rd, opposite Gamestop. Christmas decorations detract at Donegan's. The busy bring centre at Tesco Metro was very neat; however the crates stored in the front car park give an untidy impression. A blank information noticeboard outside the Town Hall requires attention.

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

Your annual estates/gardens competition is helping you to motivate residents and ensure that all play a part in presenting their areas to a high standard. Well done to all recent winners for their efforts. You are continually evolving this competition for the greater benefit of the community. The creation of 'districts' is a good idea in a town of your size and helps provide a sense of place to residents. The standard was high overall. It was wonderful to see so many vibrant residential streets so close to the town centre. The standard of litter control was excellent in those

we visited. We are glad to hear that active residents groups are supported financially by Kildare Co Co. Estates off Ballycane Rd looked well.

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

Naas has many roundabouts, many nicely landscaped and offering a good first/last impression of the town. Sponsorship from local businesses in maintaining these to a high standard is acknowledged. We loved the roundabout on the Dublin Road and the display of poppies on the Caragh Rd. The new monolith stone and fine stone walls on the Sallins road were admired. The neighbourhood greenway is a very exciting project and will make Naas an even more sustainable community to live in/visit. Road surfaces were in good order as were the many cycle paths. Your 'welcome' signage gives a good first impression. The new bus hub blends in well. Recent work on the Sallins Road and Kilcullen road is noted. The pedestrianisation of Poplar Square would be most welcome as we felt it was overrun with cars and difficult for a pedestrian to navigate. A new streetscape/landscape plan would be of benefit here. Finger posting for the historical trail is excellent. The bilingual blue/white name signs were admired. We were glad to see that most lanes have name signs to give them an identity.

Concluding Remarks:

We admire your positive and inclusive approach, organised structure and unrelenting enthusiasm to present Naas at its best. You are role models of how Tidy Towns should work in any large town. Well done for all your hard work and keep it up!

Second Round Adjudication:

There is a refreshing vigour to the tone of your submission. Community involvement 'is spontaneous' you declare. You must be the envy of every committee in the country with that support. Being age friendly in your activities at both ends of the age spectrum, being inclusive of the 'Old Naas' and the 'New Naas' residents illustrates your idealism in embracing the contribution of everyone in the town in your ambitions and in your projects. One can see the results in the appearance of the private and public realm throughout the town. The outstanding memory of the trip will always be the discovery of a Naas Historic Trail sign. Route plans were abandoned immediately and I followed the sign and was led to a charming row of elderly town houses beside a stream. What an experience! Then one gets information on the Naas carpet factory. Later I discovered that these signs were to be found all over town. They always led to a destination worth visiting with information that enriches the town experience no end as in the Christian Brothers monastery description. All of these finger signs are attractively presented and maintained and entice one to follow them. Another feature of the visit is the sculpture trail. The adjudicator did not follow a particular trail but came upon these divine sculptures all over town, a venture that shows much thought and planning over a long period of time and also indicates an appreciation of the arts among you. The sign for the Moat Theatre is another example of a town catering for the arts. Another highlight is the Grand Canal. The Grand Canal does not just pass through Naas. It is celebrated in Naas in the maintenance of its surrounds, it is enjoyed as an amenity by the towns people, it is cared for as a rich wildlife sanctuary, it is even recreated in your street art. The presentation of the canal in the neighbourhood of the library is a landscaping highlight with water as its showpiece, centrepiece shrub. Your submission is most impressive in describing your awareness of the local wildlife, in your provision for that wildlife, in creating opportunities for people to enjoy the wildlife of the area as in the provision of the cameras. A most innovative and wildlife sympathetic project is your effort to protect the otter from traffic. The adjudicator especially lauds the beehive venture. In case you are not aware of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan it is mentioned here. I am most likely wasting my breath as you possibly know all about it! One came across some of your wonderful wildlife information panels, attractive in appearance and teeming with information. Even the wildlife corridors are featured. This adjudicator says 'Amen' to the comments of the first adjudicator with regard to your work in waste reduction and in management of resources. Your section on watering plants is an example of how experience teaches one common sense. A positive outcome of reducing your summer bedding planting may be that you provide greater forage for your bees with the planting of bee friendly plants. But there is need for balance in your landscaping plot as the main street does benefit from the profusion of summer colour provided by the tubs and hanging baskets. One loved the surprise of a colourful garden as at the Fire Station or as at Monread Montessori. Also appealing is the use of tree planting not just to seclude houses on the approach roads but also to act as a sound barrier. The residential areas of Naas appear, for the most part, to be ideal places in which to live. This adjudicator's favourite approach road to the town is the Blessington Road with the walls, the trees and the wonderful planting, the estates parked at a distance, all combining to welcome the visitor. There is an appearance of care and pride not only in the estates but also along the main thoroughfares, no weeds, grass mown, no fly posting, very little litter, graffiti a rarity. There is not a lot of Gaeilge to be seen so Fionntrá as a house name in Oak Glen is refreshing as is Loch Buí as a street name and Mac Suain an an bhFaiche wins the buailleadh bos with Radharc an Chalaphoirt a close second. Certainly there are challenges to the appearance of the town and to the quality of Naas living. There are challenges in the presentation of your main street from a visual viewpoint. As an ACA this street is a treasure to be cherished but marrying its fine buildings to the commercial needs of the present is an ongoing process. Therefore it is vital that modern premises respect their august surroundings while also thriving. Some apartment blocks need a visual lift. The area around the Citizens Information Office is shabby. No need to mention how the adjudicator felt about some of the shop signage. The buildings up by Loch Buí look forward to a new lease of life. Well done to the artist who worked on the upper storey of one building. The gravel on the surface in this area was not in keeping with the overall tidiness of the town. The only kerbside weeds were at St Michaels Terrace.

Such negativity is no way to finish a report on a visit to a town that has been so enjoyable. The site of the Willow Garden and the Well Lane well could be a neglected piece of ground. You have brought it to life. Who painted all those bollards so painstakingly with white paint? Imagine how they would look without the devotion of the people

who got lumbago from bending over. The building housing The Kildare Youth Services has the sparkle and vitality not just of youth but of the buzz this adjudicator experienced in your town.