

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Straffan** Ref: **385**  
County: **Kildare** Mark: **320**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **08/07/2016**  
**03/08/2016**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2016</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	46	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	40	40
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>320</b>

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

Straffan Tidy Towns committee is welcome to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2016. We enjoyed our first visit to your lovely village. Thank you for your comprehensive entry form along with appendices, maps and photos. We acknowledge the hard work that has been done by Straffan volunteers to bring to this high level. Your submission is quite weighty and we would recommend that you review the volume of information being submitted. You have a lot of detailed text under the category headings. We would recommend you try and keep it concise and make use of bullet points. 'Projects planned' should be included in your Plan only. Your entry form only asks for current/recent work (since last you entered). It is not necessary to submit all the maps that you did. We just need one map of the town to enable us to find our way about the village and identify your most recent work. We couldn't find this one crucial element. Two versions of your Tidy Towns Plan were submitted, again unnecessary bulking up of your submission and a waste of paper. Two versions of the (nicely done) K Club leaflet were submitted, one will suffice. The 67 odd pages of your 'Straffan Archaeological & Historical Background' is too much detail to submit in an appendix of a Tidy Towns entry. Of course you may refer to it and include a page or two if you feel it is important. Please give some careful thought to the presentation of your information next time to make it less frustrating for the adjudicator to navigate. You also risk the adjudicator missing out on what is really pertinent to your current entry.

Your active committee of 8 members has assistance from others as required. You have good links with Kildare County Council and Kildare Leader Partnership. You have the support of your school, churches, clubs and local businesses.

You communicate your messages via local newspapers, parish bulletin, leaflet, email and direct contact. We would like to congratulate you on your nomination to partake in the Entente Florale competition. We wish you a successful and enjoyable experience with it.

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

The Straffan Inn is neat and fresh – presentation is further enhanced by window boxes and hanging baskets. The Mace and butchers is very well presented. Hopefully the nearby commercial premises will be purchased soon; however it looks relatively ok and only the empty window displays detract from the streetscape. Planting in front of this building enhances the area. A new, wider entrance was under construction at the GAA grounds. Seating areas are beautifully maintained.

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

Planting and overall landscaping is making a big impact in Straffan. We were impressed by the number of well-maintained green areas of various sizes. One of the highlights is the planted green area opposite the Straffan

Inn. Carefully selected permanent planting create stunning displays around the stone seating areas. The Church of Ireland has attractive grounds. To create the impression of a village focal point, we would recommend that hanging baskets or window boxes around this junction have a uniform style/theme. Floral displays on the church wall bring a splash of colour here. Great work has been carried out in front of the lovely community centre. Your involvement in Entente Florale has enabled you give some quality focus to this category.

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

The K Club has a wealth of habitats and wildlife that can be enjoyed by visitors. This year you have carried out a study of your flora and fauna as a follow up to a previous report. We look forward to seeing this and your planned interpretative signage next time. The 'Treasure Hunt for Wildlife' sounds like fun as well as educational. Bat walks/talks are also much enjoyed by young and old in the community and raise awareness of these special creatures. Well done to the volunteers who have carried out 'bat training' in order to further educate the community. Taking part in online surveys such as IPCC's 'Hop to it Frog Survey' are important ways of contributing to national research databases. You already have a good working relationship with the school so we look forward to some joint biodiversity initiatives. We loved the outdoor classroom and vegetable plot at Scoil Bhride. Keep up the good work.

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

Your car boot sales ensured many items were reused as well as raising much-needed funds for your community centre. The 'Bring & Swap' day for uniforms is another good example that is also practical and money-saving. Well done to the school for organising this. Offering residents water-butts at reduced prices ensures that treated water won't be wasted on watering flowers, washing cars etc. You included this also in 2015 so please be clear on exactly what you did this year in relation to this particular initiative (follow up etc). You have initiative a similar initiative with regard to compost bins. Were there any energy/water saving technologies installed as part of your community centre refurbishment? Your encouragement of businesses to prevent waste and your ongoing recycling initiatives are also noted. We look forward to hearing about your planned projects next time.

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

Your litter picks are frequent, organised and involved a large number of volunteers. The village was practically litter free on the day of our visit so well done to all your proud residents for maintaining such a clean and welcoming village. Your litter bins are nicely designed and are well maintained. We note that your volunteers empty these bins. The 'adopt an area' initiative is getting residents to be responsible for their own areas. The illegal dumping is very frustrating for you and difficult to tackle. Your ongoing contact with the litter warden in this regard is noted. Do tell us about your anti-litter awareness campaign. Well done to members of GAA, scouts and fishing club who also lend a hand.

We get the impression that Straffan is paying attention to 'Tidiness'. Apart from one cardboard box, the bottle banks were in neat order. Your vigilance regarding inappropriate signage is commended – this didn't detract from our visit. Is it necessary to have the cones on the grass beside the GAA area. You are probably trying to prevent cars parking on the grass but they do detract from the overall tidy appearance. Your ongoing lobbying in relation to undergrounding of cables is acknowledged.

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

Straffan residents are obviously very proud of their village. Residences along the main streets and approach roads were mostly neat and tidy. Straffan has several housing estates – those we observed were neat and litter free, some enhanced with attractive landscaping. Your involvement in Entente Florale has led to you receiving some assistance and advice from Kildare Co Co in relation to co-ordinated planting across your housing areas. At Straffan Gate we observed a well-maintained shrubbery with planting for year round colour and interest. Straffan Manor would benefit from a few more trees. Some areas were without name signs. All was in neat order at Coarsemoor and at the Beeches area. A fine house was under construction opposite the equestrian centre. We admired Straffan Cottage and garden as well as the quaint cottages around the corner, with their half doors. Well done to all residents involved.

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

The approach from the K Club gives a wonderful first impression of Straffan – grass verges, timber bollards, and a good variety of shrubs – everything well maintained. Perhaps you could consider painting field gates within your village boundaries to match them to the surrounding high standard. Do stick to a uniform colour if you do. Straffan also has some fine hedgerows that enhance the approach roads. On the Celbridge Road, one broken bollard on the roundabout requires attention. The repaired stone wall was observed. 'Welcome' signage is very good – in classic black/white with your Straffan logo. Ardrass is a lovely tree-lined country lane – popular with walkers no doubt. Back lanes were clean. At the field opposite the Church of Ireland – perhaps a native (or beech) hedgerow could be planted to bring this section up to the high standard you have achieved elsewhere.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It is encouraging to hear that Straffan's long-time participation in Tidy Towns has been improving community involvement, pride of place, as well as your local environment. Thank you and keep up the good work.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

The size of your submission was daunting. One regrets any criticism of the people who compiled your submission as they went about their work diligently and enthusiastically and created a wonderful picture of your village. But much of the content is of little value to the adjudicator who comes to visit. I would prefer to spend time wandering about the village than spend time reading about it. That said the tone of the submission endeared me to the compilers and the village as it was factual and not self-congratulatory. One fact stands out: 'We are now over 40 years in existence'. And the appearance of the village reflects those years of toil. Straffan is a credit to all involved. There is the traditional heritage village and there is the modern twenty first century Straffan, famed the world over. Both Straffans co-exist in a joyful expression of a creation that could not have been dreamt of 40 years ago. One experiences the attention to detail in all categories of this competition. As one arrives one observes immediately the rich, native hedging, the meticulous attention to planned footpaths, care for grass margins, tree planting thru the generations. The clusters of housing add to an air of distinction. Then as one approaches the junction the Community Centre blows one away: the window art, the wheel barrow, the raised beds, the new concrete surfaces, the design. Window art seems to be in vogue as one loves the representation of the village on the Mace window. This picturesque village centre must have helped inspire the Europeans on that memorable weekend. And we have not got to the golf course yet. All signposting is attractive as in the Straffan signs, the Slán abhaile or the Maynooth Road. Forget the prospect of seeing the K Club. Instead savour the work done with hard landscaping at two corners of the junction, the Straffan Inn invites one inside, so do the houses, nay homes of Coarsemoor and St Bridget's Terrace, the Church is a gem, so modest in appearance as compared with the manner of so many Churches but devoutly planted, the Calvary devoutly presented. This area provides the heartbeat of Straffan, not the famed course. A trip out the Maynooth Road reveals more delights. Footpaths again and a hedge, which hedge has been indented to allow space for a tub of flowers from time to time. The landscaping on Barberstown Road is divine and so demanding of time and care. One now regrets that one did not experience the roundabout and that road into the village first because this is a delight. As one travels along from the roundabout to the junction the '40 years in existence' is emblazoned on each side of the road and becomes a repeating chorus line in one's mind. Luckily the roadside appearance enticed one to travel along the Ardrass Road. And it is worth the visit if only to experience the trees. The village is full of antiquity: the Castle in the graveyard, the graveyard itself, the Church of Ireland building and its accompanying graveyard, the Cottages at Church View, the RIC Barracks, so also the name on that delightful cottage called the Forge, the steam museum and walled garden a reminder of Straffan ages before those 40 years began. The Lynch Gate is a fitting memory to your ancestors. Wonderful that Straffan House from 1832 has been transformed. There is colour everywhere, sometimes provided by the trees but so often created over the years with your landscaping plot. Every opportunity to landscape in the public realm is grasped. Very often the stone masons provide the beds for the colour. Bicycles are the props for the planting on at least two occasions. Litter picking and general tidiness are toil and trouble for so many TidyTowns committees. But you are succeeding. The gleaming appearance of your bins encourage usage, the dog fouling signs are unambiguous. Some of the young trees in Straffan Manor need urgent attention. One felt that the trees in Barton Grange are ideally suited to estate living. There are times where one feels that some of the newer estates need more colour and planting to continue the forty shades of green of the public realm. Well done to the club member who brought an old gate to life by painting it white and blue. And well done to the farmer who painted that farm gate black and who also tends to the railing. The information panels are a charm, so informative, so attractive in appearance. The adjudicator was delighted with the map for the K Club. That enhanced the experience of those wonderful surroundings. Your work in the wildlife section is to be lauded, and it is worth including a summary of the Natural Biodiversity of the area in your submission. Well done to Scoil Bhríde for its involvement in the Green Flag programme. And well done to you on the projects in the sustainable living you mention. One would love to find a water butt in a public area as the adjudicator cannot access those in the private houses. The very best of luck to you in the Entente Florale. It will take a great performance to beat ye.