

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Inistioge** Ref: **394**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **318**
Category: **B** Date(s): **16/06/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42	43
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	49	48
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	314	318

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Many thanks for your application to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2016 and we note your participation for 52 years, a fantastic record. Your committee of 23 active committee members having worked approximately 800 hours per annum is a significant contribution to the community and we note you can count on extra volunteers for specific tasks. Links with residents, voluntary groups and schools are very strong and you receive support from local businesses and public bodies. The use of Facebook, notice board, parish newsletter, newspaper etc., are your means of communication. The involvement with your local school is commendable and it is great that some children with their parents volunteer to help with some of the work. How interesting for a second level student to participate in the President's Gaisce Awards using Tidy Towns as part of their project. Well done on the achievement of a third green flag. Many thanks for attaching a map of the area with project locations marked for our attention and for printing photographs with the text on the application. The problem we had with the map was one of trying to find project numbers, for example, 1A, the Community Garden is not shown on the map but the Community Garden is written there. For convenience we suggest that you provide a list of projects and numbers on one page to save the adjudicator from going over and back through the application to understand what the numbers represent. Thank you for attaching a copy of the 3 year plan.

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

Inistioge is a pleasant little village and we note your identification as a National Monument because of the rich archaeological and architectural heritage. The spacious town centre allows a good view of the two churches (St. Mary's and St. Columcilles) and the Square with its fine mature trees. The ground in front of Saint Mary's Church is gravel which adds to the character of this 12th century tower and church ruin. The well-trimmed hedge inside the wall looked well from the grounds and from the street outside. Saint Columcilles Catholic Church is an imposing building and we noted there are Tighe family mausoleums in this area. The signs were in good condition, although there is too much information. I did what many people do nowadays and that was to take a picture of the sign for reading some other time. The ancient St. Columcille's Churchyard is a very historic feature of the town but the scorched earth management policy takes from it considerably. The use of weed killers over the years has resulted in significant soil erosion which it appears has resulted in the headstones plinths and the pathway being raised above ground level. Of the sparse vegetation in this area we noted one corner with oxeye daisies and Pyracantha in another and ivy growing top of a building. We strongly advise a different management approach that is more environmentally friendly and in turn would be more aesthetically pleasing. The town centre looks lovely and everywhere was clean and tidy. Millennium Gardens with the armillary sphere beside the old tower is an attractive feature that is well maintained. Hydrangea petiolaris is doing a fine job of attaching to the tower walls. Many premises such as O'Donnells, M. Walsh, Woodstock Arms, The Otter and Circle of Friends looked well. Day Break while clean is closed for business; we note your concern

and success in saving the Post Office. We also noted improvements such as painted hoarding on windows to vacant buildings so well done in that regard. The Square has fine mature trees, including specimens of lime, copper beech, plane trees and flowering cherry. Features here include seating, sculpture, water drinker and an obelisk surrounded with bollards and chains which were painted silver. We noted it was 'erected in 1879 by Louisa Tighe to the memory of her beloved husband'. There was some litter in this area. For the first time ever, we noticed a postbox in a park, opposite the Post Office. The River Park is very well maintained and the information sign with historical facts including flora and fauna was interesting. The numerous spiders and dirt inside the glass indicates it needs refreshing. The bridge is a fine stone structure and we note it was rebuilt in 1763. We enjoyed the view of the bridge and surroundings including an area where horses were grazing in a field with plenty of wildflowers. This linear park has some picnic benches and an attractive little bridge crossing a little stream (with clean water) leading to the well-maintained GAA grounds. The composting area was noticed as well as clean public toilets. It is great to see that a 'Guide to Inistioge' is available.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The beautiful Nore valley where Inistioge sits is a very pleasant landscape and your work has enhanced that aspect of the town. The Square with its stately mature trees are a great block of greenery (and some copper leaves) that dominates the town centre and adds significant softening. Our surprise is that very little other street tree planting has taken place; perhaps you decided to retain the built environment vista as it has been over the years. However, there is scope for some tree planting to complement those on the Square, especially since there is sufficient space and trees would help to regulate and reduce the impact of car parking. We admired hedges here and there such as in the grounds of St. Mary's Church and in small private spaces on the winding High Street. On one corner we noticed two houses adjacent to each other practically covered with climbing plants; we were too late for the Wisteria blooms. Planting of Spiraea and some other shrubs on Church Street beside Woodstock Arms add some greenery at this point beside where Caum (Mill) stream exits the culvert. Our compliments on the standard of floral displays on pavements and on buildings. The River Park already mentioned greatly pleased as did the excellent hanging baskets on poles and the small linear planting on the wall is very well done. The herb garden (including strawberries) beside the old tower was noted. Containers with plants en route to the boat slipway are unnecessary in this very rural and natural area and the same comment applies to the little round flowerbed beside the river. That sort of planting is not in harmony with this Riverside area and would best be left for the centre of the town. Other planting at the boat Slipway was well done. We enjoyed a visit to the famous Woodstock Gardens. St. Columille's Well was a special treasure to find. We enjoyed the experience of crossing the stream and walking up the winding steps flanked on both sides with a mixture of alpine and herbaceous plants, most of them in flower and then finding the well with its clean water and no litter to be seen.

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

Under this heading you have listed four projects, the Pollinator plan, the bat study, the Dawn Chorus and control of Himalyan Balsam (*Impatiens balsamifera*). We are aware that the Nore Valley has a problem with this invasive (though beautiful) plant and do not recall seeing any clusters of it during our visit. We note that wet weather did not dampen the spirits of the 30 participants for the Dawn Chorus event. These activities of raising awareness are very appropriate and commendable. You have a rich natural area surrounding your community (especially the stream and the Nore River) and it is important to promote an awareness of its many traits and to map these habitats. Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. We noted many wildflowers during our visit and we suggest that perhaps you would consider developing such meadows on the wide expanse of grass on the approach from Thomastown. It would add more delight, more biodiversity and save you some time and expense of mowing the grass. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. Useful school projects include listing the plants and animals to be found in your natural environment and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?).

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

The polytunnel has been a major initiative this year to reduce costs of plants for displays and as an education facility for gardening skills. It is great that many groups are making good use of it and you are reusing seed trays and containers. The use of a mulch mower for grass cutting is also noted. It makes little sense to be collecting grass. Rain water harvesting is another project and surely your past experience proves that you have an ample supply of rain. Other projects mentioned include collecting aluminium cans for recycling and garden sharing and the sustainable arts and crafts. We saw the recycling bring banks in a prominent location on the edge of an open space. Years ago when these containers were new it was important that they be very visible. However, now that most people are aware of and use them, we suggest that a less conspicuous location be sought for them. Other measures for consideration in regard to sustainability include contacting your waste contractors to determine what quantities of material is being recycled. In regard to water usage, self-watering hanging baskets are a help in reducing the amount of water used and also the task of watering. In response to an over use of chemicals for weed control, many useful products of the past are no longer available and therefore communities are encouraged to use other means such as hoeing to maintain weeds. In some cases, allowing wildflowers to develop is an acceptable alternative. In that regard, we have already mentioned the excessive use of herbicides in St. Columille's Graveyard and we also observed similar practice at the riverside

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We note your continued attention to this matter and are pleased to mention that we found Inistioge a very clean and tidy community. We appreciate that extra effort follows flooding events and you have risen to that challenge. While

the bring bank on the Mill Road was clean, we suggest it would now look better if moved to a less conspicuous location. There are still some redundant poles in your area and no doubt you are pursuing the particular authority to deal with that matter. The Litter Free sign at the River Park was well presented. The steel container enroute to the boat slipway needs painting. On the wall at the entrance of the L82831 the steel posts and wire is damaged.

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

Residents of Inistioge display great pride in their community by the high standard in which they care for their homes. Houses were in good condition, well painted and in many cases enhanced with floral displays. Ard Aoibheann estate with its attractive name stone and trees on the open space was admired. The large well-maintained open space at Mill Road is an opportunity to plant more trees.

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

The approach from Thomastown is delightful. There is an immediate sense of community pride with the wide sweep of well-maintained grass and perennials at the back which hide the river and the woodland (at least from a car seat). This would suggest that perhaps a viewing point could be added, especially since there is space for car to pull in to the roadside. A suggestion therefore would include providing a small paved area with some seating which could act as a viewing point for the river. We also mentioned above the possibility of wildflower meadows here as well. The Welcome sign is fine but the 'Beware' sign conveys a different message; does it need to be here. We haven't seen these signs in many other places. If the B&B sign was placed beneath the welcome sign, instead of the 'Beware' sign, two poles could be removed. Better still, remove two signs and leave the 'Welcome' sign. Further on, we liked the low stone wall and its cover of ivy in places, also roses and closer to the village, a collection of herbaceous plants growing alongside the native Red Valerian (*Centranthus ruber*) which looked fantastic on the day.

Concluding Remarks:

Exploring Inistioge was a delight for us. Well done on your work to date. We hope this report helps to provide guidance to continue with more improvements.