

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Westport**

Ref: **366**

County: **Mayo**

Mark: **325**

Category: **E**

Date(s): **24/06/2016**

**04/08/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	45	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	44	44
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	35	36
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	42	42
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>325</b>

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

Many thanks for your entry in this year's Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for a truly impressive piece of work that is pleasing to the eye as well as packed full of information to a good level of detail. It is really too big, however. It is acknowledged that the competition has become broader and more holistic over the years and requirements more exacting. For your group - at the very top echelons of the competition, it is thus a major task to report on all of your activities over the last year. For this reason, we will allow your rather weighty submission to pass with no sanctions on points but do please note this advice and the comments of last year's adjudicator, and try to reduce the amount of paper submitted. Okay, that is a minor scolding over and now back to the praise you are due. Your entry was ordered, easy to navigate and beautifully illustrated with not just photographs but also clippings, screen shots and drawings. A great achievement. The map was excellent and just about perfect for use with a logical key. Thank you. You made this adjudicator's first assessment of Westport that much easier. Well done on the inclusion of your work plan as requested.

In this category, you've a heck of a story to tell. Great success doesn't happen by itself and you clearly describe your volunteer base and structure as well as the input from your invaluable scheme members. Your engagement with your own citizens is illustrated by the Think Tank. You clearly show how your Junior Tidy Towns is getting on. This adjudicator was impressed by how you assist other Tidy Towns - as far afield as Bandon! - with their work. Your communication is excellent. Congratulations on your Purple Flag and European Sports awards.

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

The author won't waste too much space on recounting your achievements back to you but will briefly discuss some of the stand-out projects. The Clew Bay Heritage Centre was closed by the time it was visited - suffice it to say that the reparations here must have been a huge task. He was able to see the transformations to some of the key buildings of your town centre - the Dowager House, on the Mall and of course your new theatre. A wise man once told me that the sign of a good haircut or a good choice of clothing was that they suit you so well that no one notices. This may or not be true, but I was reminded of this looking at your theatre and though I'd seen the previous building many times, the theatre really looked like it had always been there. Congratulations on all of these. The mill is now a memory and the Quay looks better than ever. Good luck to the owner of the Towers - again it fits in so well - and to the whole town for the major projects in the pipeline.

The shopfronts of Westport are generally of excellent quality. They are varied and individual - a mix of traditional and contemporary which are often side by side. Moran's and Murtagh's illustrate this well as do O'Connor's and Boutique Collette. Shopfront maintenance is almost uniformly good; McLoughlin's book shop and Lynch's grocer/hardware as examples. Your hotels are a credit to the owners and management, from the great façade of

the Castlecourt and neat contribution of Mill Times to its streetscape to the gorgeous grounds of the Westport Woods. The owners of the garage on Mill Street can take a bow too. As can the Centra/Top petrol station- for the sharpest forecourt in the west. Toby's Bar is an original. The Chilli Restaurant/Café doesn't need the extra sign or one so big at the front of the shop. Dunne's Stores is moving, we were told and its lovely erstwhile home is to have a new incarnation.

The basketball court of the college looks somewhat abandoned. The Post Office looked great on adjudication day with planters complimenting this lovely building. Ulster Bank was looking well too but could do without the willow-herb growing on its porch. The street name sign for South Mall has been painted over and is hard to see. Breheny's garage could do with a little work on its windows and doors, but the signs is lovely. The directional signage at the clock was looked at critically and it was wondered whether its replacement had been considered.

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

Ah, it is no hard labour to review the planting schemes and projects of Westport. A sincere word of thanks to your Municipal District gardeners for bringing such colour to the streets and roadsides. Thanks also for providing the insights into your planting plans and projects. The before and after pictures telling a great story. Well done for opting for plants for pollinators - this is now an urgent priority for us all. The 1916 commemoration project is noted. However, the Edible Landscape project initiatives really stood out from the rest. The linear orchard is another excellent project that will benefit wildlife as well as your landscape. The Sentinel sculpture was discussed in last year's entry but since then you have made it feel at home with some public space added. Once again, it looks like it really belongs there. The Octagon looked as good as ever with fennel providing a fragrant addition to the inspiring colours here. The landscape planting at the Clock was very pleasing. The Quay was seen early in the morning and without any traffic the area looked so sharp and clean. The bicycle racks were admired here. The plane trees at Altamont St don't appear to be thriving. Are they too exposed here? One is dead opposite Credit Union House. There is another casualty on the South Mall opposite McGreevy's and again at the top of Bridge Street.

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

You describe a packed schedule of events and projects in this category for the last year. While it is acknowledged that there are overlaps, try not to duplicate entry materials (e.g. the edible landscape project) and the Clew Bay Garden Trail might be better placed within the previous category or even closer pertain to Housing Areas. While it is believed that your built-in swift accommodation was adjudicated last year, the maintenance and monitoring of these is ongoing work. The tree identification and labelling is an excellent initiative. The adjudicator believes that this is the first example of insect glamping in Ireland. Great! More seriously, your town's involvement in bee-keeping would seem difficult to surpass. It's good to see that action against Japanese knotweed is underway. The adjudicator would advise urgent action on this on the Greenway lest it is unintentionally spread. Also underway is a new wetland project and the adjudicator saw the planning notice on the Greenway - Good luck - a most worthwhile project. Himalayan balsam was also noted on the Greenway - near the Mill Street car-park ramp- this is a much easier invasive species to deal with if tackled on time. Please do. Later, another plant was noted on a bar in the stream overlooked by your new footbridge on Distillery Road.

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

A very holistic array of projects and initiatives was found in your entry. Some of these combine the conventional with the not so ordinary. Music on the Greenway - why not? Thanks for the background and hard data on the Smarter Travel initiative. It must be said that outside of the pilot towns, the adjudicator doubts whether much of our population knows about it at all. Unlike your Greenway! You probably had no idea of the Tsunami of cycling and Greenway-fever that your project would release. Good luck with the final year of the programme. You continue to make the most of it: Operation Transportation, Bike Buffet and Flashmob all raised a smile and the Spring Forward Festival is a great idea. Away from travel and your entry describes fascinating and cooperative measures by schools, public, business and will this be Ireland's first Eco-Congregation? WESCO is an incredibly busy group and an ideal partner for Tidy Towns and the town as a whole. Your commitment to address climate change and the actions illustrated are impressive indeed. You have yet more plans in train with which you are wished well. This is a difficult category but you seem to have nailed it this year.

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

Your litter-picking rota system is so impressive. Well, more impressive still is the names that fill it and the people that turn up day-in and out. Well done to you all. Your dedication extends far out on the approach roads and you should know that your zone of influence extends far out of town (the adjudicator having cycled some of these litter-free roads this year). Your war on butts is a struggle but hang in there - the tide is turning against this as an 'acceptable' form of littering. You are tackling the issue of dog litter too with some flair and technology. Is there any empirical evidence on the success of the talking lamppost?

There was unfortunately some litter seen on arrival at the Mill Street car-park. Some clothes and (bizarrely) a kettle had been left at the bottle banks here too. However, this was all gone a few hours later. The recycling banks at the Quay were gleaming. The public toilets were spotless. However, the parking and bike signs at Altamont Street were dirty. The Telefón box at the clock is in need of a touch up. Despite looking closely on a busy day, the adjudicator found almost no litter. Your rota is demonstrably effective.

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

The Residential Areas Competition is a big deal in Westport, it seems. This is an excellent initiative and it's great to see this is so well organised. Truly, wide support is essential for this part of the competition. The new street name signs were noted and these are to be increased. It's good to see that Cedar Park is active and cared-for. It caught the eye and looked like a nice place for an office or small business. The B&B's on Quay Road are excellent - what lovely gardens! Well done to the owners. The lovely old Georgian on North Mall has been given a great facelift.

A rowan tree at Ashwood is not doing well and should be removed. The tree supports could probably be taken from the mature trees here, including the evergreens. The stair sides here are in need of painting. Fr Angelus Park has excellent landscape planting and the green maintenance here is so good. You are advised not to plant at the base of trees (e.g. at St Mary's Crescent). Watch out for dead trees here - an ash and a birch will need to go, it is suggested. Dead trees were also noted at Cedar Park. The front wall is in need of painting here. The unmown bank at King's Hill was dotted with creeping and meadow buttercup, clovers, daisies and even an orchid. Good news for bees in residence here. The freshly-painted house at Fair Green was noted. The work at the terrace on Altamont Street was also admired. A derelict house between McGreevy's Bar and the hair salon is unfortunate.

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

The Sentinel has been praised already but since it has itself won an award in the meantime, congratulations! Your entry included an excellent description and illustrations of same. The under-grounding of cables continues. The end must be in sight. The Distillery Road Boardwalk was tried out - a great benefit for older and younger residents it is thought. And another spur is added to your Greenway network. Well done. The route over the viaduct at treetop level is so enjoyable. Some damage to the palisade fencing at Rice College was noted. The newly landscaped Fair Green really enhances the area. How pleasant this would be to sit on and look down the mall.

The beautiful planting at the name sign on the N84 leaves you in no doubt as to where you are. A little further out an older name sign is missing and the circular planter beneath has been abandoned. There is also a roadsign missing at the entrance to Cois Abhainn. The N5 was very good - landscape planting with an easy hand. The road surfaces and margins were in good condition. The new work at Distillery Road was admired. The parking of huge SUVs on the pavement here might be a little intimidating for residents, though. A speed limit sign is missing at Faiche Road. The Louisburgh Road seems a little neglected. Three signs here are in need of attention and the Westport sign is hidden by vegetation.

Your laneways and alleyways are an area of strength for you and the businesses here - barbers and wine-bars for example, are bright and cheerful. A couple of wheelie bins might have been stored further back.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

A real pleasure to be back in Westport and to get to see the fruits of your dedicated and imaginative work. The town improves on every visit. Well done.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

It was delightful to visit lovely Westport after an absence of some years. The town looked well and greeted this adjudicator with great sunshine and a healthy air of freshness from sporadic rain showers. It was also a busy town that greeted me on a Wednesday afternoon with traffic in great density. Of course traffic means business and you may well be a victim of your success with such traffic density. Your off street parking is well acknowledged and seems to keep excessive traffic pressure at bay. The town is well served for the visitor and has a most comprehensive commercial appeal. I liked the facilities for pedestrians who seem to be well respected as they traverse the various streets and laneways. Your lengthy entry submission (too lengthy as hinted in the first report) outlines your work on hand, your plans and vision for the future and your empathy with other entrants seeking advice. I liked your many heritage buildings, display maps and information boards and your abundance of floral displays in a plethora of various forms and presentations. Advance and street signage is important and very well positioned and maintained throughout the town, this we acknowledge, but the erection of 14 finger signs on a single post adjacent to the Octagon is a big ask. Because of your image and success in the National Competition we did not expect to find any unoccupied premises. However, a number of empty premises were observed, including R. Walsh Publican at James Street. This pub may well be still functioning with evening openings? This adjudicator has often praised the presentation of Credit Union Premises in his travels and Westport is no exception. This new office is a wonderful acquisition for the local Credit Union and commands a splendid position over looking the Carrowbeg River. The building is quite unique and will no doubt serve its subscribers well. Just two observations: bearing in mind the year that is in it we feel the signage on the building should be bilingual, and we suggest you tackle the iron work on the railing fronting the building which would add to the distinction of the building. The hedge should be replaced with a single species one. The door is exceptional. The adjacent Fair Green has been revamped and offers an immediate relaxing escape from the busy neighbouring streets. The Octagonal monument and allied landscaping are superb and dominate in a positive way their location. Across the way before heading down James Street the premises here is overpowering with unnecessary commercial signage. Approach roads are first class and the ongoing Bealach Glas development from the Newport (and other locations) to Westport was a sheer joy to witness. I liked the immediate connection of the town with the landscape and this has come about because of generations of tree planting and prudent development. Well done on your efforts to 'save the swift', a by chance pick up of a one Euro leaflet at the Ballycroy National Park Centre by this adjudicator gave a full appreciation of what is required, so go n-éirí libh. You have raised your marks again this year and your work programme augurs well for the future. My final visit was to the Harbour on an evening visit and this fine square is well maintained and attractively presented. It was a pleasure to spend an overnight in Westport and we look forward to continued success, (with a reduced

submission size). Adh mór don bhliain seo chugainn.