

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Glasson**

Ref: **214**

County: **Westmeath**

Mark: **299**

Category: **B**

Date(s): **05/07/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	40	41
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	40	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	32
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>288</b>	<b>299</b>

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

Welcome Glasson to the 2016 Tidy Towns Competition as we value your participation. It is great to see that the competition draws such strong interest in your village and that you have 14 dedicated members on your committee. Well done on forming good links with Fas, the Community Employment Scheme, and Westmeath County Council as no doubt there are a valuable source of assistance in completing your projects. Consider also contacting the County Leader Programme as they may be able to help you with funding and advice. We are pleased to read that local businesses are supportive of your efforts and this clearly reflects the level of appreciation for your great work at a local level. Your communication strategy appears comprehensive with traditional methods being used (such as local newspaper ads, the noticeboard in Spollens Centra and the Church Bulletin) and digital means like email and texting. Have you considered setting up a website? This can be a very effective way of showcasing your projects (by posting before and after photographs) and keeping the wider community up-to-date with your work. We are delighted to read that committee members regularly visit the local school but we would encourage you to do more. Have you considered engaging in joint projects with the school children? Many tidy towns committees have schools closely involved in their projects under the landscaping, wildlife, habitats and natural amenities and waste minimisation \ sustainable resource use categories. In most cases, the schoolchildren have proven to be an excellent source of innovative new ideas and enthusiastic young helpers! Why not encourage the school children to identify a suitable project (one that would make a good tidy towns project and which also satisfies the green schools curriculum) and after some initial supervision, assign them full responsibility of it? We are pleased to hear that the tidy towns competition has had such positive benefits locally and we would like to point out that as adjudicators, we love to visit your village each year. Thank you for your comprehensive application form, tidy towns action plan and hand drawn map, as they were a great help during adjudication.

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

The adjudicator enjoyed his first trip to Glasson as there are a range of features that provide interest for the visitor. It is wonderful to see that so many of the original buildings in the village remain in active use and in such good condition. Thank you for your one page description of the history of the village as it was read with interest and to be honest, it left us wanting to know more. We were fascinated to read that the Chapel and the Courthouse are used as homes but we were unable to find them. Perhaps you can indicate them on your map for 2017? Given the rich history of your estate village, have you considered setting up a heritage trail with information plaques at key points of interest? We loved the terrace of traditional style two-storey dwellings that runs along the Main Street of the village and it is heartening to see the commitment of commercial business owners to maintaining their historical buildings. We particularly admired the Glasson restaurant, which is a lovely traditional style structure that is finished in natural stone and located in a prominent position overlooking the River. However, there are many other examples which include Grogan's bar, the Villager Pub and Hair Salon – all of which are presented to a high standard. The

Glasson Pharmacy and the Gallery were similarly impressive and the Garage along with Tavanaghs Butchers deserve similar praise. The committee is commended on the projects that you have undertaken in 2016 including; painting and refurbishing a range of buildings (including the bungalow opposite the heritage centre on the Low road, the Pharmacy, the Villager Pub, the Wheelchair Car Premises and the Garda station). Well done also on rebuilding the wall on Benown road.

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

In the view of the adjudicator, this is a particularly strong category for Glasson and it was clear during adjudication that are your planting schemes are heavily influenced by your designation as the village of roses. Many fine examples of rose beds could be found. The large wooden framed planters on the approach road from Athlone that accommodate lovely red and pink roses in bloom serve as an excellent introduction to the visitor of what to expect when visiting Glasson during the tidy towns season! The bright red roses behind the decorative hedging (and adjacent to the pump) at the junction of the Sweep Road are faring really well and we loved the sequence of different coloured rose beds that are cut into the verge on the Sweep approach road. On the Main Street, the roses behind the wooden seat help to enhance the bus stop while the roses in full bloom on the verge just down from the Garda station also looked great. We were very impressed with the small park area that is located immediately adjacent to the River and the rose beds here are a lovely addition to this attractive space. It is also necessary to recognise the contribution of individual businesses and homeowners to this category with gardens of the school (opposite Annes salon) and the restaurant standing out. We were also very pleased to read that your committee is engaged in an extensive tree planting programme with 150 saplings of Scots pine, larch and oak planted on the northern bank of the river. This is in addition to a large lime tree been planted on the Ballymahon Road and Hawthorn tree being planted at the Garda station. This approach is highly commended and the benefits of it will be seen by future generations. The planting of daffodils on approach roads and Berginia on the Low Road is acknowledged.

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

We are pleased to read that your committee has been proactive in this category as a number of good quality projects are presented in your application form. We note that 153 saplings have been planted on the riverbank and this project has already been discussed in the landscaping section of this report. However, it is agreed that these trees will also significantly enhance this area as a habitat as they mature in the years ahead. You are commended on setting a good example with respect to cutting hedges in the appropriate period and we urge you to ensure that others, including landowners and farmers, do likewise. It is pleasing to read that you have not forgotten your role in raising awareness of biodiversity and that your chairman spoke to 2 classes of the school and introduced them to birdwatching. Don't forget to advise them that Birdwatch Ireland has asked for bird sightings (both rare and more common Irish birds) to be recorded on its website. Consider also involving them in other projects under this category and encourage them to undertake a wildlife survey of a small area in the village. Once the survey is completed, they could monitor its biodiversity over time and use the information to prepare wildlife information panels. It is noted that the adjudicator in 2015 reiterated the 2014 suggestion that access to Walterstown Bog be explored and we wondered if there was any update on this matter? It is also noted from last year's report that your committee was attending a biodiversity conference and we wondered if this had led to any new projects being identified for your village? Finally, the committee and other members of the community are commended on their use of local plants for food and drinks and for growing sunflowers for birds.

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

This category has increased in importance in recent years and it now accounts for the same marks as the other categories of built environment, landscaping and wildlife and natural amenities. As your marks in this category are generally low (relative to the other categories), it represents an excellent opportunity for you to improve your performance in the competition. It is heartening to read that your committee seems to understand what is required under this category as a number of good projects are presented for 2016. We note that a range of projects have been undertaken that aim to minimise energy use – such as installing LED lighting throughout the village and also in local businesses (such as the Centra). You are also commended on running an initiative intended to increase the number of batteries that are recycled and well done to the school for introducing the school book rental scheme and a uniform sale day. We were particularly pleased to read that the tidy towns group is leading by example in minimising waste and using resources efficiently when carrying out its tidy towns projects. You are applauded for growing your own plants, harvesting seeds and drying begonia tubers for your future landscaping schemes. Well done also on using manure– as this allows you to avoid buying fertiliser from the shops (and all its associated packaging and transport impacts). It may also explain why your rose beds are so successful! Have you considered harvesting rainwater for watering your plants or using recycled materials, such as timber for planters or bird boxes? Don't forget to tell us what you're also doing to raise awareness and to encourage people in the wider community to minimise waste and sustainably use resources. Your local environmental awareness officer in Westmeath County Council and the Tidy Towns Handbook should also be consulted for additional ideas for projects under this category.

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

The committee will be pleased to hear that the standard of litter control observed in Glasson on adjudication day was generally high with the vast majority of areas appearing litter free. A small number of incidents of litter were spotted at the residential area adjacent to the Athlone approach road, at the small Park beside the River and in the car park of the Villager Pub. However, the stretch of the N55 that passes through the village was completely litter free! Therefore, it appears that your collaboration with your neighbouring tidy towns group in Ballykeeran (and also

in Tubberclair) for litter collection along the N55 is a very worthwhile project, which is proving to be very effective. It was noted from your application form that tidy towns volunteers collect litter on the approach roads, and that the community employment workers ensure all bins are emptied, foot paths are swept and that weed growth is controlled. This hard work can clearly be seen during adjudication with all areas appearing weed free, cleanly swept and neat and tidy. A small number of improvements are possible with respect to signage. The stop sign beside Annes Salon was in reasonable condition but it needed to be cleaned. The welcome to the village of the roses sign on the Brittas Road had no landscaping and it was in need of maintenance. Finally, the Lough Ree-trail sign (beside a wheelchair cars Ireland) was somewhat faded or dusty looking and was in need of attention.

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

It was clear during adjudication that home and business owners in Glasson take great pride in the appearance of the properties, gardens and the village as the vast majority had worked particularly hard to present their properties to the highest standard possible. This work made a very positive contribution and it helped to enhance the appearance of the village on adjudication day and we would like to commend everyone on their fine efforts. The standard of presentation was also high in the residential area located to the rear of the pump (at the junction of the Sweep road). It should be noted that the adjudicator was unable to spot name signs on any of the three residential areas in the village (the one accessed from the sweep road, the one accessed from the Athlone approach road and the small residential area adjacent to the medical centre). Is there name signage in place in these locations? If not, are there plans to provide name signage for them in the future?

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

The approach roads are, by and large, in very good condition. The key approaches from Athlone and Tubberclair achieve a particularly high standard with neatly trimmed verges that are free from weed and litter. The roadside boundaries and signage are in good condition on these roads and the standard of surfacing and road markings is also high and reflective of a road with national level importance. The sweep road looks well due to its neatly maintained verges and its attractive rose beds but one slight negative relates to its surfacing – which seems poor, particularly where the roadside meets the kerb of the footpath. The Brittas Road approach is generally nice but could be improved by cleaning the village name signage.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The adjudicator thoroughly enjoyed his first trip to Glasson and you are commended on the quality of your projects for 2016. Well done and we look forward to returning next year.