

# Tidy Towns Competition 2017

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castlecomer** Ref: **389**  
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **302**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **24/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	42	41
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	45	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	46	45
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	49	49
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	29	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>302</b>	<b>302</b>

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

Castlecomer is welcome back to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2017. Thank you for entry form – however as last year's adjudicator pointed out, the map was of absolutely no use to somebody unfamiliar with the town. Also the small text was so faded we couldn't read it anyway. We need to be able to see major landmarks, approach road as well as your recent work.

Your committee of eight people has the assistance of a CE scheme and a Tus scheme as well as support from local businesses. You left blank the question regarding wider community voluntary commitment. Do you have any? You use traditional channels to communicate your messages – local newspapers and parish newsletter. As recommended by last year's adjudicator, a 3 Year Plan is recommended under this category. This enables you set out actions across all eight competition categories, prioritise your work and monitor your progress.

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

We had to guess where your key buildings were as the map didn't indicate same. We saw the courthouse but no sign of a youth café on the day we visited. The beautifully restored building at the top of the Square was admired. What is this? We couldn't see information anywhere, maybe we missed it? The landscaped grounds are most impressive. The Community College has nicely landscaped grounds. The gates will require cleaning/painting soon. The Art & Craft Centre at the Discovery Park consists of lovely stone buildings. Attractive stone buildings were observed at the Discovery Park Craft Centre. The town centre has a mix of shopfronts and signage, some better than others but most neat nonetheless. Dooley's butchers and Harrington's pharmacy both have a fresh appearance. The ivy-clad Holland Condon Solicitors looks well. We were delighted to see that planning permission sign up for the proposed refurbishment of the former Avalon Inn. More importantly we were delighted to note that this section of town is in an ACA (Architectural Conservation Area) which hopefully will mean that your fine built heritage will be protected. Nearby the Eurospar shopfront is totally out of sync with the rest of the street, particularly the left hand side of the building which is totally blocked off with poor quality signage/posters. Holohan's is another attractive shopfront with original sash windows. Castlecomer has some lovely old traditional signs such as 'Commercial Establishment' and 'O Braonains' – it would be wonderful if these could be preserved. The Community Hall looks well – just watch the weeds at the base of the wall. The church and grounds are presented to a very high standard. The containers at the gate work well here. The Medical Centre is nicely presented with a good mix of planting. Bollard's pub looks good with its colourful window boxes. We were delighted to see that the old fire station is in current use. The new station looks well with some attractive tree planting to the side.

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

What a pleasant surprise to come to a small town with such a rich heritage of trees. The Discovery Park is a fantastic amenity on your doorstep. From the Square down to the bridge is one of the highlights of the town with the tree-lined streets and attractive flower beds. The school grounds along here further enhances the overall impression. A corner flower bed was observed out the Portlaoise Rd, a little attention to weeding is required here. The grotto area is well maintained – we feel you could leave the steep banks to more minimum grass cutting (twice a year) so as to encourage wildflowers. This would leave time for litter picking rather than strimming perhaps? This would also add more interest to the area as well as enhance your local biodiversity. Both flowerbeds here are well maintained – we feel another bed would provide a better symmetry here. Both containers would be better placed elsewhere we feel.

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

Have you recorded any activity in your bird boxes? Perhaps one of the school classes or a youth group could take charge of this? The Discovery Park is a wonderful facility your doorstep. Do they run any initiatives/events to raise awareness of the local biodiversity? Do you have any local person with an interest/knowledge in wildlife? Perhaps you could ask one or two interested people to focus on this category only? There are also plenty free resources (guided walks etc.) available from the likes of Birdwatch Ireland, Batwatch Conservation Ireland. Or you could google 'All Ireland Pollinator Plan' to pick up some simple tips for planting bee-friendly plants or managing grass cutting so as to encourage them. 'Spring Cleans' are relevant to the 'Litter & Tidiness' Category. Based on the lack of information in this year's submission we are surprised your mark is so high at 46/50 so we feel we must deduct a mark. We look forward to hearing of further progress next time.

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

Your various recycling initiatives are well-established; however as last year's adjudicator pointed out, this category is about so much more now. Well done to the schools for achieving their Green Flag and encouraging reuse, recycling and composting. It is vital that you have a formal link between Tidy Towns and the schools as there is strong overlap between both of your programmes. You can work together for mutual benefit. Have the schoolchildren brought any messages or surveys home on reducing waste/water/energy usage? We are delighted to hear that your local library hosts a variety of talks on topics related to this topic. You would get more marks if you can show stronger linkage with such events. Did Tidy Towns members attend? Can you promote such events through your local channels, thereby ticking a box in 'raising local awareness'? Your Kilkenny Co Co Environment Awareness Officer may also be able to guide you and often runs informative workshops/network forums. Please refer to the SWRM guidelines and pick a few more ideas that would work best for Castlecomer. Alternatively, visit [www.localprevention.ie/tidytowns](http://www.localprevention.ie/tidytowns) to see what other initiatives are happening around the country. We look forward to hearing of further progress next year.

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

We would like to know more about your ongoing litter control. Is this done by your volunteers or by the CE scheme? Minor littering was an issue in many areas of the town – mostly food and drinks packaging. Can you tell us how the residents of Castlecomer are involved in litter prevention? Did the wider community get involved in National Spring Clean for instance? Did any local groups get involved? You mentioned the schools under another category. Can you get volunteers to 'adopt' a certain stretch of road/street? For instance the footpath outside the lovely Wandesforde N.S. was heavily littered with drinks cans, plastic bottles etc. Could the students adopt this short stretch as part of their Green Schools outreach actions? It really does detract from the lovely presentation of the grass and planted areas along here. There was litter near the 'welcome' sign on the Athy Road – not a great first impression. Raising awareness is an important element of this category so please tell us how you do this. Anti-dog fouling signage was noted. Dog fouling was noted on the Portlaoise Road so we would urge you to continue with this campaign for the coming year. There were some weeds along footpaths and bases of walls in the town centre. There was mossy debris on many footpaths – it looked like it may have come from overhead gutters.

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

Generally residences throughout the town were nicely presented. The lovely period homes at the Square enhance the streetscape. We admired the black/white terrace house with black railings set off by window boxes of geraniums. Could the boarded windows at the adjacent house be painted in? It was heartening to see original sash windows or appropriate replacements in some cases. Housing estates were neat with some attractive tree planting in places. Marymount Estate consists of neat homes; however the bed in front is overgrown. The Kilkenny Rd includes nicely presented terraced and individual home. Maryville has neat green areas On the Portlaoise Rd; we were impressed by two homes with beautifully presented railed-in gardens. Do continue to encourage residents along approach roads to keep their boundary walls and roadside verges presented to a high standard. Please show us how you are encouraging residents associations to take responsibility for taking care of their own areas with regard to litter, tidiness and planting. Items you included under this category were more relevant to 'Landscaping' category. Please read the text under the category headings for clarification.

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

You submitted no information under this category so we can't determine your new work. The Athy road is lined with magnificent mature trees. A lovely name stone and flower planting here further enhances the visitor's first impression. The approach from Ballyragget wasn't so impressive. Consistency in signage and planting schemes and town boundaries is recommended in the longer term to bring an overall sense of cohesion to the town. Fine

stone walls were observed along the Athy Rd. The neat picnic area was observed from the lovely stone bridge. Street names were missing in many instances and as they were not on your map either, it was difficult to get our bearings. Some directional road signs need cleaning (e.g. Portlaoise Rd)

**Concluding Remarks:**

Thank you Castlecomer for your efforts this year. Please keep up the good work. We wish you well with future projects.