

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Graiguenamanagh** Ref: **393**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **284**
Category: **C** Date(s): **23/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35
TOTAL MARK	450	284

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome back Graiguenamagh to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2017. We note that your last entry was in 2015 so we hope you are back to stay. We enjoyed immensely our visit to your picturesque town to view all the positive changes that have occurred in recent years. We were impressed by the positive approach being taken by your committee despite major challenges. On a matter of housekeeping, there were too many maps, none of which were of any use to somebody who is stranger to the town. Please provide one map only with streets and approach roads clearly highlighted. Also please ensure the map is easily detachable from the main submission in order to carry around and the photos easier to access as we are adjudicating. The current presentation of information is making your entry cumbersome and frustrating for the adjudicator to navigate. Thank you for submitting a copy of your three year Tidy Towns Plan (2015 – 2018).

We are impressed with your range of sub-committees to ensure all areas of the competition get equal focus. You work closely in co-operation with your local clubs, community groups, schools and residents committees. Please save project details for the relevant category (e.g. planting under Landscaping, list of recycling initiatives under SWRM category) and just briefly mention the project or link here. You enjoy the valuable assistance of your CES, Tus and RSS workers.

It is encouraging to read that the Business community has been so proactive in the setting up of 'Love Graig' as well as innovative fund raising efforts. Support from external bodies such as Kilkenny Co Co and Kilkenny Leader Partnership greatly assists your efforts. You are reaching out to all sectors of the community with your various communication methods. Encouraging newcomers to get involved in your activities is lauded.

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

The Monk Sculptures grab the passer-by's attention for sure – they look fantastic, not to mention unique! The Bank of Ireland is neat and fresh. The Playground is a fantastic amenity for your younger residents – all was in clean order there. Graiguenamagh has a mixed bag of shopfronts in terms of presentation – you continue to work closely with the property owners to encourage individual improvements... The 'Love Graig' Business Group encourages and supports painting, power washing and general good maintenance. We feel that Graig is paying attention to upper storeys as well as the shop itself. This is important. Some buildings that caught the eye for the right reason included M Ryan's pub, M Doyle's pub, CJ's Coffee House and FJ Murray. Your ongoing efforts in relation the derelict/vacant properties are acknowledged. The development at the Quay will have a hugely positive impact on Graig and a much needed boost in terms of tourism.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The newly landscaped area outside Bank of Ireland was admired, enhanced by the recently-arrived monk sculpture.

Your efforts to tidy up and landscape the area behind the Fire Station are commended as are improvements made to the Brandon Park entrance. An immense amount of 'behind the scenes' preparation work goes on at your thriving polytunnel. We loved the sharp design and clean lines at the Harristown roundabout. Flowers along drab walls introduce a welcome splash of colour. Good planting softens the appearance of the Garda Station. Landscaping at the library gives a pleasant courtyard atmosphere. The Duiske Inn has a pleasant outdoor seating area with plentiful floral displays. We personally felt that the volume of flowers on the 'Graig Garden' façade was way over the top for this streetscape. The area in front of the 'Milking Monk' on the Borris Road looks well.

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

The fact that you have community-owned woodland is impressive. You are working hard in Silaire Wood to create native woodland here. Your Dawn Chorus fund raiser raised awareness of your local birds as well as raising money for a good cause. We welcome the fact that you are inviting younger residents to get involved in practical initiatives such as constructing bird boxes, bug hostel and tree planting during National Tree Week. Well done to the transition years, primary students, scouts and girl guides for their hard work. Planting hazel trees to encourage your red squirrels is another welcome project – you obviously have your homework done! Top marks for removing the Himalayan Balsam from Silaire Wood and to Duiske College for assisting with this. You have been liaising with Kilkeneny Co Co in relation to the invasive Japanese Knotweed – do continue to closely monitor risk areas for any sightings as it can spread so rapidly. Wildflower meadows make for attractive features in themselves as well as providing valuable food source for our struggling pollinators. You show good knowledge and understanding of this crucial biodiversity issue and more importantly your group is eager to raise awareness and implement simple actions that can reverse this trend. We read with interest of the re-emergence of your Water Meadow habitat and the wildlife that goes with that. You have many other worthwhile initiatives happening in your community – environmentally friendly farming, swift monitoring, not to mention your recent 'Biodiversity in Action' walk/talk to celebrate International Day for Biological Diversity. Your ongoing awareness in terms of river water quality is commended – it is encouraging to hear that the river is unpolluted. Keep up the excellent work.

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

We applaud your practical approach and 'can-do' attitude here. Simple but effective measures have been implemented. Many are in relation to your sustainable community garden where you grow your own plants from plugs or seed, overwintering of suitable plants, making and using your own compost, sourcing rotted horse manure for your planted areas – well done!

Any water conservation measures? We love the concept of your monthly plant & gardening equipment sale/exchange – this gets to the heart of what a sustainable community is about. You have other examples of Reuse such as your buy/sell/exchange facility on Facebook, reusing old library books in the schools among others. We are intrigued by your efforts to promote hen ownership and with the take-up achieved following your demonstration. Your ongoing recycling initiatives are well-established. We look forward to hearing of further progress next year.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Another detailed submission here – do please spell out to the adjudicator what is new since last year so that we can award you marks accordingly. Apart from ongoing maintenance work, older projects should not be included in the main entry. Your daily litter patrols by CE workers and volunteers ensure that Graiguenamagh is maintaining a high standard in litter control. The town was busy but very clean on the day. It was a warm sunny day so the quay swimming areas was buzzing with young people – we expected the usual plastic bottles and cans one comes to expect but pleasantly surprised when we got there to see that the area was litter-free! We must commend these young people for being proud of their town. Well done to the Angling Club for playing their part, also to everyone involved for recycling all materials where possible. Your ongoing awareness raising keeps everyone on message, particularly in relation to the scourge of dog fouling. The Transition Year 'art refuse' project is a novel idea that would definitely get one thinking. Another innovative idea is getting agreement from one of your local farmers to store bulky goods in advance of delivery to larger centres – a win-win scenario based on your feedback that illegal dumping has reduced. All was in neat order at the bottle banks –there was a little minor littering at the steps to the playground.

It is a fantastic achievement to have removed overhead cables from the centre of the town – well done to all who persisted in this matter. We commend the business community for funding the power washing of shop fronts. The murals on the new temporary hoardings at the quay are impressive – what a lovely project for the children to be involved in. Working with your Area Engineer to unblock shores and trains is a simple but effective way of maintaining clean streets. Your liaison with Waterways Ireland in relation to removal of abandoned boats is welcomed. The 'Pound' is nicely highlighted; we would advise against dumping grass cuttings in view of the gate. One of the animal cut-outs had fallen over.

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

Neat and colourful homes and gardens were observed at Fairview. The new railings, stone and planting were noted. The new urn planters work well. Perhaps the stairway railings could be planted soon? We look forward to seeing the name inscribed soon. The entrance to Duiske Crescent is beautifully maintained – the surplus bricks beside the wall could be removed to give a tidier appearance. You mentioned 'level of competition' between estates. Is this informal or do you have a competition? It is encouraging to hear that many of your estates have active residents associations. We were particularly impressed by the private gardens viewed from the bridge at the Harristown roundabout. Heading back into Main St, we passed a row of neat stone cottages; complimented by colourful hanging baskets. Ballyogan House was admired. Graig residents are obviously proud of their town and homes –

well done!

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

We acknowledge your efforts to maintain your approach roads in a sustainable way by leaving the back sections of verges uncut to encourage wildflowers. The same approach is applied to the rear of Duiske Abbey grounds. Roundabouts are nicely landscaped, thereby giving a welcoming impression to the town ahead. Planting snowdrops and daffodils adds colour and interest to your approaches a various times of year. New lighting on the Borris Road is noted.

The new car park at the GAA makes this one of the finest GAA presentations we have seen. We are impressed with your effort to save plants and transplant to other more suitable areas. Well Lane has some lovely stone walls. The concrete block walls aren't so impressive. The small bridge nearby could be cleaned soon. This walk is a very pleasant experience of the back end of the town – there was just a little litter towards the Mill Bank. Plenty of visitor information signage was in evidence such as that for the 'Brandon Hill Loop' walk. There were very few outdoor places to sit and rest or chat in the town centre apart from the bars – perhaps a couple of benches in wide paved areas would be considered, for example near the church. There is scope to make more of Market Square in the longer term – it appears a little undersold (paint railings, reduce car park spaces and increase public realm/tree planting with expert advice). The riverside opposite the Quay – where does this walk go? Is a sign required here? Japanese Knotweed was noted along here as was some minor littering. Good signage on cycling routes was noted.

Concluding Remarks:

We admire your positive and inclusive approach, organised structure and unrelenting enthusiasm to your town at its best, while at the same time preserving its unique character. Community pride and spirit is alive and well in Graiguenamagh. Well done and keep up the great work.