

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Killasmeestia** Ref: **1215**
County: **Laois** Mark: **286**
Category: **A** Date(s): **01/07/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	36	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	34	35
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	32
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	33
TOTAL MARK	450	276	286

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Fáilte Coill A Smaoistigh! Welcome Killasmeestia to the Super Valu 2017 National Tidy Towns Competition. You have 10 members on your committee. This is a large committee and you are helped by another four volunteers. You are committed to holding weekly work evenings and additional days when they are required. The Community Employment scheme works with you. And we are sure that this of major benefit to you.

You seem to be well thought of by local agencies and businesses as you list quite a few who support you in one way or another. Moreover you list the local authority as the first of these agencies.

Well done on your communication methods which include traditional and modern means of communication. This will appeal to young and old alike. We hope that in relation to the parish newsletter that you keep any minority churches also informed on a regular basis of your work. As adjudicators are not obliged to research Facebook pages of the various Tidy Towns committee we think that you should nonetheless ask next year's adjudicator to look at your Facebook page if possible - as we were very impressed with its presentation and content, and its up-to-date features. Well done to the person or people who look after it!

We are delighted to see that you meet with both the childcare group and the local national school. After all these are the volunteers of the future. You have now achieved 10 years of work within the competition - going from strength to strength.

You say that the Tidy Towns movement is a focal point in a rural community and that the level of support which you constantly receive indicates a pride of place.

We do not appear to have received any Tidy Towns plan with your entry. Last year's adjudicator said that they would encourage you to develop a 3 to five-year village plan. It is very important to submit a Tidy Towns plan - as such a plan focuses your mind on your resources and ambitions. A three or five-year plan will focus your mind on the important issues facing you, and it will help you to prioritise your work. A plan should contain at least a simple list of your aims and objectives and a clear timeline, and it need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should tell us as to how you go about this consultation. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to your village in drawing up your work programme. It is difficult to advance in this category in the absence of such a plan. Please do refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five-year plan. We would suggest that you layout your plan on the basis of the competition categories.

Item 5 of the guidelines on how to complete your Supervalu Tidy Towns entry form advises you not to use Google

mapping "as this is often unclear or inaccurate for the purpose of adjudication purposes." However your particular map was reasonably acceptable insofar as yours is a very small village, and it was easy for the adjudicator to identify the major buildings etc. Thank you for providing the key for the map sheet relating to an index list of some of your projects for this year. However the same lettering should have been used throughout your entry form indicating each project in the written section related to lettering/numbering on the map. Item 3 of the entry guidelines asks you to use the same numbers or lettering as you use on the map in your entry form indicating each new or continuing mappable project for the adjudication year. We suggest that you carefully study the guidelines to completing your entry form annually. Do not leave it until the last minute. Do not leave it to one person. Sometimes groups get so involved in working on-the-ground that they forget the importance of spending time submitting the required information as per the entry form guidelines. This leads to confusion and often leads to the omission of work carried out. It is very helpful to an adjudicator to have a good clear map which relates carefully to the entry form showing all the 'mappable' new and continuing/phased projects when the adjudicator visits your town. Attention to the issues raised will enable you to move forward in this category.

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

Well done on the new railings which have been painted this year. Last year's adjudicator was impressed with the perfectly matched detail on the railings, as last year's entry contained 'before and 'after' photographs of the railings. It is good to see the church yard walls recently freshly washed and painted. Yours is a lovely typical rural vernacular church in a lovely setting. It is a credit to the parishioners and the church authorities. Furthermore your Facebook page shows what an important event the local cemetery Mass is in relation to graveyard and general church maintenance. The adjudicator found your village to be very peaceful and a serene place located in lush countryside. You also painted the gable end of the church. Furthermore you have painted the Community Centre. This all shows an appreciation of your important built environment forming the centrepiece of your village.

Providing the steppingstones as a path to the bug hotel will provide an attractive 'avenue' to the children in the childcare centre nearby for their visits to the 'hotel'.

Remember that this category recognises the general use of the Irish language in your village, so we would encourage you to use Irish where possible as you do on your name boulders. So we loved your 'Birds of the Locality' poster and thoroughly commend you for using the Irish names on this poster! The 'voice' details were fascinating, and we are sure that many people will get hours of enjoyment from trying now to recognise the bird calls from this information! This seems like a new project as the poster is pristine - but you do not include it in your form. And last year's adjudicator does not refer to it. Therefore we will give you the benefit of the doubt with marks with regard to Irish and 'Wildlife' category!

Additionally if you can show us where you are providing sustainability and access for all people regardless of age, size, ability or disability this will also attract additional marks. For instance a repaint of the wheelchair blue road parking space outside the church wall would be a start!

Whereas you mention the painting of the railings at the childcare premises under 'Residential Streets and Housing Areas' we credit this work here under the Built Environment. We loved the primary coloured fencing at this site. The simple colourful classical lettering on the childcare building gable was restrained and effective.

On your Facebook page we would like to commend the good photographs of the church. Your 'wet paint warning' photograph on Facebook - of the railing painting - was apt! The paint was well dry by the adjudicator's visit!

You appreciate your built heritage and street furniture. Thank you for the very interesting information on your pump plaque. It meant the adjudicator was later looking for other examples of the 'Kennedy pump'. This was a very informative interpretation. The pump itself was admired (and photographed!) And you have not over-decorated its surrounds. This is very praiseworthy as it 'stands alone' because of its unusual nature and does not need 'fuss'. The adjacent seat looked inviting - but duty called! We also admired the retention of the old National School plaque (1886). Furthermore you have set the original front door step in pride of place locally. And finally the Garron Stile - a feature of your lovely stone wall tradition - heritage plaque was interesting. Well done on interpreting aspects of your rural built heritage! We were a little bit less sure about the boot surmounting the churn on the Borris approach. Do not go overboard on interpretation. The churn was a good feature, but the boot made it look a bit amateurish!

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

It is good to see the original wildflower garden restored and protected. We visited the new wildflower space in the parish field. We look forward to seeing the trees which were planted during National Tree Week mature in time.

You maintain all the grass in the village, and on adjudication day this looked terrific. We particularly admired the perennial planting at the limestone nameplates. The new hedging was also noted. Thank you for the photographs of the hedging and of your lovely natural stone boulder with your village sign 'as Gailge as well as in English. Using the Irish version of your village name always gives the visitor a clue to the reasons why the village is called that particular name, whether that is a local geological, geomorphological, or historical reason. This always adds interest to visiting any centre.

The new planter boxes in the childcare garden and flower bed planted with perennials are credited. Although it is not strictly a landscape issue we were interested in the Facebook entry for 30th April which reminded people of the local tradition of blessing their fields with Easter water. This is a lost tradition in many areas.

We are unsure about the flower boxes attached to the hedge and fence across from the church. We think they actually detract from what is in essence a simple rural naturally landscaped village. We see that last year's adjudicator concurred and thought that they may be more appropriately located elsewhere.

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

We are sure that the insect population of the village has been making great use of the revamped bug hotel as well as the new delightful mini bug hotels. Perhaps you could talk to your County Heritage Officer with a view to perhaps organising a bat walk through the village and in the adjacent countryside. Bat walks usually attract great interest amongst the local population - and now that you have bat boxes installed it will mean more to everybody in understanding the bats' lifestyle and habits. It was good to see people working on the wildflower habitat both in your hard copy photos and Facebook pages. We noted your pollinator poster at the wildflower garden. On visiting the new wildflower area we noticed that the chain was down, and we also observed some burnt vegetation. How did this escape from your policy of organic weeding? Thank you for the photographs. Your bird boxes will, we hope, be used extensively by the local bird population. Perhaps ask Birdwatch Ireland to help you survey and monitor their usage? This is a project the schoolchildren might well be interested in helping out with. Have you thought about last year's adjudicator's suggestion to look into the habitat rich rural graveyard? Talk to your County's Heritage and Biodiversity officers who could also help you in this area. Well done on maintaining the wildlife verges on approaches to the village.

We particularly commend you on your organic weeding methods. This is labour-intensive. We appreciate that and we praise your efforts.

Hedging appears to have been cut back fairly recently on both main approaches to the village. However the upper part of the hedges remained intact - with just the sides trimmed. We are not sure if this was carried out by the local authority? We would just like to remind you that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming bordering non cultivated land - you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Before trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. Birdwatch Ireland (www.birdwatchireland.ie) has a very good website which gives lots of information on this issue.

It is well worthwhile looking at your Facebook page in relation to this category, as it has a wealth of beauty contained within, as photographs of your beautiful local wildflowers are recorded by a photographer with a good eye and a good camera. One suggestion would make is that you identify the many wildflowers and plants photographed in your area as an educational tool for the village. We loved the photographs of the wild orchids and honeysuckle and all the other native plants which are in many places endangered wild flowers. They are safe in your hands!

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

Your continuous litter picks and recycling are admirable. However the litter picking belongs to the litter category where we credit this work. Recycling is important, but is only the base of the pyramid of sustainable waste and resource management

Once again the colouring competition in relation to cleaning dog waste belongs to the litter category where we credit this work. Well done on the continuing work which you are carrying out in relation to water. We observed the water butt at the side of the childcare building on our way to the wildlife garden.

We would recommend that you contact your local authority's Environmental Awareness Officer and ask for guidance in this category. Perhaps they can organise an information evening for the community to guide you in moving forward in this area. The Tidy Towns Handbook will also help you to come up with ideas. This adjudication category has been expanded and updated with a new advice sheet prepared for communities in 2014. You may find this information sheet on the Tidy Towns website or you may request a copy of this advice sheet- if it is not already in your possession - from the Tidy Towns unit HQ. This will help you also to understand and move forward in relation to sustainable waste and resource management. Last year's adjudicator suggested that you look at the local prevention website on the Tidy Towns webpage.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Like so many other communities in your county you participate in Clean Up Laois week How many people participate? What outcomes in relation to litter can you quantify? You have maintained the high standard from last year in relation to litter picking every second day. This is a big commitment and it is showing dividends. Your competition in relation to dog waste in the childcare school introduces the children to their responsibilities where they are pet owners at an early age.

Your project to keep your village a poster-free zone is working excellently. Your diligence in removing posters promptly is obviously having effect on those who would erect posters. Now people with posters will know that they need not stop in your village! We did see the remains of a cable tie on a pole.

The gate which last year's adjudicator referred to as leaning against a wall still appears to be in the same position. Perhaps it is time to reinstate it and conserve it!

An 'anti cigarette butt' poster was lying against the wall by the post-box. This should be reinstated or removed. The post box upright was a little 'rough'.

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

We note that houses in the village were painted during the last year. The properties in the village were presented in a pristine fashion, and were really lovely to look at - complementing the church and surrounding countryside. Do pass on our praise to all concerned, as you depend on the residents to a large extent to give this sense of care and maintenance to the village core - given that you have few public buildings in the small community.

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

Although you mention the painting of field gates under the Residential category we credit it here under this category - as field gates are quite a significant feature of approaches to any village or town. We would suggest that you continue the painting of field gates out as far as the speed limits - especially on the Borris-in-Ossory approach. The gate near the village sign on the Borris-in-Ossory approach would greatly benefit from repainting. You maintain the approach roads with the wildlife verge remaining. The lovely boulder name sign on the Rathdowney approach was beginning to be encroached upon by some planting. Elsewhere we noticed a 'keep off the grass' sign encroached upon by some low hedge vegetation. It is important to keep an eye on vegetation growth near signage at this time of year. Road markings were generally clean and legible on- the-ground, but some of the yellow road lines needed refreshing at the edges. The footpath outside the school needs repair - due to cracking from parked cars - one assumes. Some road resurfacing in this general area would be welcome.

The seating areas are kept clean.

The schoolchildren road sign on the Rathdowney approach was twisted - so that it did not face the road and was also slightly damaged.

Concluding Remarks:

Yours is a very unspoilt village with a lot of natural amenities and a small but well maintained built environment. You seem to appreciate this. We consider that you are hard working and that you have the potential to advance further in the competition. You are achieving a lot and we hope that you are enjoying the process. We wish you continued success this year and into the future. Go n-éirí libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!