

# Tidy Towns Competition 2017

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Pike of Rushall** Ref: **737**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **233**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **01/07/2017**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2017</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	30
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	29
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	27
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>233</b>

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

Fáilte Baile Mhuighe Moire! Welcome back Pike of Rushall to the Super Valu 2017 National Tidy Towns Competition. We are very happy to see you back in the competition after an absence of seven years. There have been changes during that seven years in the competition. However the overall competition remains one which endeavours to make your place a better place to live for yourselves and also for your visitors. The community is the heart of any centre, and we are delighted to welcome your community back to the Tidy Towns 'family.'

You are a small village but you still have five people on your committee with another four volunteers. Meeting weekly is a great commitment for a small group. You work out a plan for the following week and liaise with the school staff and the local priest on a regular basis. This shows an organised approach. Meeting as often as weekly means that plans do not go into abeyance. You have a Community Employment Scheme locally. You also obtain help from Laois County Council, local residents, a parish committee and some local businesses. You named these businesses, and we would like you to convey our appreciation to them for their support. You communicate with the community through the local school, church Mass announcements and leaflets. We hope that you also include any minority churches represented in your area. Have you considered setting up a website or a Facebook page or using text messaging? These are very convenient methods of communication and they appeal to the younger generation.

We are delighted to see that you liaise with the teachers and pupils and that they help you in your work. It is great that some new families have moved to the area, and that you plan to continue entering into the future. You also credit the Community Employment Scheme with it being an encouragement to get back involved.

You try to include all age groups in discussing what each would like for the future of the village. This is good. You are perfectly right in aiming to keep your plans simple and just enhancing the natural attributes of the area which you are blessed with. As you discuss what you would like for your village you should begin to draw up a three or five-year Tidy Towns village plan and submit this with your entry in 2018. 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 continue to 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. As 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. Good luck with this!

Your map was simple but adequate for a small village area. However we would draw your attention to section 3 of the 'how to complete your Tidy Towns entry form - which asks you to number each new or continuing project for the adjudication year on your entry form under the correct category. It is important that these numbers should be shown on the key to the relevant town or village map. Section 5 elaborates on this in saying that a clear key is an essential part of the map and you are recommended to include a key on the map sheet itself. It is important to read the entry form guidelines and to comply with them. Give time to submitting a good form which includes all your work for the adjudication year clearly annotated.

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

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

At the school car park we admired the neat trellis plantings. We would be inclined to take away the three small plastic planters on the boundary wall - as we feel they detract from the natural state of the remainder of the landscaping i.e. from the nice dry stone wall and well planted and presented car park in general. We do not think that this stone wall needs embellishment, and we would remove those planters to another more needy location. We admired the planting of the trellises and the wall hanging containers along the very clean white elongated wall to the car park. You have also planted the church flower pots and the large flower beds under the road signage as well as the pots at the crossroads. Well done to the children who help with planting!

The wildflower area is important and we look forward to a progress report in 2018. You cut and maintain the grass verges on a fortnightly basis. The novel idea of a fairy garden in the school car park was admired. It was an intriguing and colourful display, and we are sure it engages the attention of the children on a daily basis. You mention that you hope to look at some trees in the autumn with advice from a horticulturalist. Don't forget also that you can access professional advice on many aspects of the competition from the professional staff in your local authority. The County Heritage Officer will be of great assistance to you in relation to any heritage issues; the Biodiversity Officer - if your County engages such an officer also - can advise you on landscaping in relation to biodiversity issues with regard to landscaping and wildlife. Don't forget National Tree Week in 2018.

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

You have established a wildlife area. Do tell us more about this next year. Have you surveyed any wildlife in the area designated as such? You have replaced bird nesting boxes and perhaps you might consider asking the schoolchildren to get involved with a bird survey. You mention a bird sanctuary. However we are unsure as to its exact location or extent. We are sure that Birdwatch Ireland would be happy to advise you in relation to your interest in birds.

You have provided bug hotels which will be of interest to young children and will introduce them to the importance of such things as biodiversity and pollination. Now that you have bat boxes in place at the rear of the church perhaps you could organise a bat walk locally. Your local authority may be able to provide funding for an expert to guide you on such a walk. You might engage with the County Heritage Officer - and with the County Biodiversity Officer in exploring ways in which to further your knowledge and interpretation in this category. The Tidy Towns Handbook is also there as a relevant helpful publication. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is another useful resource.

Would it be possible to consider providing perhaps a Slí na Sláinte route with wildlife sustainable points of interest along the way? On the approach from the Kilkenny direction we noticed a lovely overgrown laneway near a headless road sign which appeared to have potential in this regard.

We observed a small amount of fairly recent hedge cutting on some approach roads. We would 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](http://www.birdwatchireland.ie)) has a very good website which gives lots of information on this issue.

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

Since you last took part in the competition this category has become more focused on sustainability in relation to waste with the emphasis on preventing waste rather than recycling waste. Your bottle bank is useful and is a recycling project. The school has a composter in place. We observed your solar powered school signage. 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. There is also a local waste prevention website to which you can link to from the Tidy Towns website. You tell us that that your local school has been awarded five Green Flags. However only one was flying on adjudication day. We would think that it would be a good idea if you could ask the schoolchildren to give a talk to the community on all the sustainable waste and resource management issues which they have encountered through this lengthy and thorough process. Quite obviously they are taking a lot of this information home to their families. However there will be families in the village or do not have schoolchildren and may not be as familiar with all the new technology and research in this area.

You have considered water conservation by placing butts at houses in the centre of the village. You use this water for flower watering during the summer months.

We would recommend that you contact your local authority's Environmental Awareness Officer and ask for guidance. 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.

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

It is excellent for a small community that you pick litter on a daily basis. We are glad to see that the local authority help you by emptying litter bins locally. We hope that the local businesses will accede to your request to remove banners and signage from your village.

Generally your village was litter free but we did observe a few pieces of litter on the school road. We also noticed some old fly posting at the corner boundary wall of the church on a lighting pole.

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

We were delighted to hear that your residential users have taken on board the importance of painting for the Tidy Towns competition, and we were glad to see that they have cooperated with you by painting and washing walls and premises. Yes indeed, gardens as you say, are well maintained and hedging is planted by householders. Again it is important to try to convey to the local residents the importance of planting sustainably and planting for biodiversity and pollination.

Could the rear curtilage of the house near the recycling bins be screened perhaps from the public in the area near the bins? Some weeding is required in this location also.

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

We understand that you are not in a position to provide bicycle lanes at present. It is interesting that your village is on the location for horse-drawn carriage holidaymakers. Does this cause you any problem with regard to congestion or road dirtying?

Well done on maintaining the roadside verges, and do not forget to provide a wildlife corridor by not cutting right into the hedge edge. As one approaches the village from the church side we hope it may be feasible to screen the rear curtilage of the house on the approach side to the church. There is also a length of hedge removed on this approach which appears to be a site under construction. We hope that this will be completed in 2018 and the site and the hedge boundary reinstated. No work was ongoing on the date of adjudication, so we hope that this is not an abandoned project.

We would strongly recommend that you paint field gates on the approaches to the village in a uniform colour. This provides a sense of arrival in the village and help in delineating your boundary responsibilities. There is a double field gate on the Kilkenny approach that would particularly benefit from painting due to its prominence. We admired some lovely wild dog roses on the same approach (right hand side) as one approaches the village. There are some lovely stone walls on this approach - together with the clean cream wall of the premises approaching the junction with the main road. Perhaps you could trim the low verge back to the end of the stone wall on the opposite side as far as the 'Go Mall' / CCTV sign.

A danger stop sign is partially obliterated by a hedge as one approaches the main road from the school side. We also wondered if this is an official sign as it did not conform to normal signage design. Quite obviously a stop sign is essential here.

The Catholic Church sign (coming north along the main road) seems to be somewhat misleading although travelling in the southwards direction it appears to be accurate. We think the double sided lettering causes this confusion. Along this stretch of main road north of the crossroads the painted blinds on the boarded-up house improved its appearance. Nearby we observed planted car tyres in the grass margins outside the speed limit planted. We do not consider car tyres to be an appropriate planting container and they look out of place in a rural area.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Once again we would like to say how happy we are that you have returned to the competition just before its 60th anniversary year. Well done to those members of the community who spearheaded this re-entry. We hope that we can be of assistance to you and help you move forward in every way. Keep in touch with the Tidy Towns website where you will find lots of helpful information and cross-referencing. We would also suggest that perhaps you as a group visit some villages of the same size and perhaps characteristics as your own village who have been involved in the competition more recently and who have made good progress. Your local authority officers may suggest some local village; perhaps you could visit some village in the region generally. A group outing can be enjoyable and informative at the same time.