

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Camross** Ref: **1159**
County: **Laois** Mark: **273**
Category: **A** Date(s): **29/06/2018**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2018 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 60 | 41 |
| Streetscape & Public Places | 50 | 37 |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping | 50 | 36 |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality | 50 | 28 |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less | 50 | 19 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 53 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 28 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 31 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 273 |

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Camross (Camros) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais

Working together is certainly working well for Camross. The list of agencies, groups and individuals that you work with is so impressive. You are certainly harnessing the skills, talents and resources from within your community. Your Tidy Towns group seems to act as an intermediary between the many groups. This is demonstrated in the interaction between the Camross Irish Countrywomen's Association group sharing several of their gardening tips, which were in turn handed onto your GIY group.

We note that you didn't enter the Tidy Towns in 2017 as you wanted to complete projects, rather than divert your resources into paperwork. While we commend your submission for the vast amount of work that obviously went into it, you can still do less work for the same result. All that is needed under each category is:

-Name of the project

-List of participants (whether this is your own group, school, scouts group etc.)

-Date of start and finish

-A few bullet points to summarise what was achieved.

-Photos. These really can replace a thousand words. "Before" and "After" photos can be used to great effect.

Don't forget to include details of the projects that the school or others perform under any of the Tidy Towns categories. The submission is not limited to work performed with the input of Tidy Towns committee members, but can reflect the work performed in the wider community.

Your use of Facebook is working very effectively for you. We agree that it is better to be part of a wider Parish Facebook page to ensure that you are reaching as wide an audience as possible.

You highlight that the Tidy Towns competition gives a community focus that brings diverse people together, sharing a common goal to make the most of the village, while instilling a sense of local pride. Your goal is being realised.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

A warm welcome awaits any visitor to the Poet's Cottage. This building would provide an amazing focal point in any village. It's hard to believe it is not an original period building. There is obvious skill and pride taken in maintaining this building. Declan was very eager to ensure that visitors feel welcome and is willing and able to answer any questions on this facility and its artefacts. While obviously the plastic chairs stacked are not part of the exhibition, they show that the cottage is not just used as a showcase to the past but is used and utilised in an important role as a community resource.

It was wonderful to see the new community hall being built between the school and the Poet's Cottage using the same stone. The continuity of this stone on your newly upgraded Welcome sign adds to this. The contemporary school building is maintained to the standard one comes to expect in Camross. The GAA building and playing

pitches also feature well here (from our research we found out it is the most successful hurling club in Laois). We concur with your assessment of the value of having this complex of buildings together (including the local contemporary church), from a community and a resource saving point of view. The times that the school needs these resources versus general community use should ensure maximum utilisation and benefit. Your use of this complex to host extra events for the wider community is to be admired.

The commercial buildings of the crèche and pub mirror the efforts of those on the community buildings. The ruins of the older church provide an impressive backdrop to the village. An historical information sign here would be useful. It was difficult to see what year the stone slabs with the names people of the parishes nearby we presume it was for the millennium. It is a nice idea to have people tied to a place. The green chairs in the graveyard are starting to get a bit rusty at the bottom. We recommend this as a project for next year.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your Orchard Community Garden appears to be going from strength to strength. Your plan in 2016 to have enough home grown produce to sell at a market and plough the funds back into the development of the garden have been realised. We wish you well with your future plan of developing a village co-op tea room that would be a ready-made venue for your produce.

Well done on your successful Local Agenda 21 funding. Your vintage farm machinery display was installed on your new plinth by adjudication day.

The village pump in the GAA colours has nice planting around it, but a little updating is needed at the top.

It is wonderful that there is a path from the small housing estate over this bridge down towards the school. On so many levels it is great when children have the option to walk to school. The area here is alive with clover, buttercups, etc. It is an excellent natural wildflower meadow. The unmowed area has an even greater variety of wildflowers. This must make a pleasant walk to school (even if the kids don't realise it on the way!)

The GAA bench adds to the surroundings here. It was interesting to read that this was in place before the estate.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Your knowledge and commitment in this area is outstanding. You highlight how the main driver, the core members of your Tidy Towns group, started out with was their own interest in preserving and protecting your fragile ecosystem and habitats in your own area, thus hopefully making a difference.

Your wildlife and biodiversity expertise must rival any community group in the country. Your tree expert who is also a master beekeeper, your administrator who is a qualified permaculture tutor and horticulturist, another dedicated member who also shares her vast knowledge of local flora and fauna as an enthusiastic amateur amongst others. The data you provide to the National Biodiversity Data Centre must be extremely extensive, including the data from your garden bird survey.

Your participation in local events provides you with the platform to highlight your expertise in this area. Your rural village regeneration group will ensure this influence extends further afield. We look forward to seeing your Riverside walk and Park development.

You are fortunate to have a beekeeper with many years' experience in your midst. His work must surely come to the fore now as the awareness of the importance of pollinators has become more mainstream.

Your conservation program within your village demonstrates your commitment and expertise in this area. So many groups wish to plant wildflower meadows, your plan in harvesting so many local seeds from within your area and currently keeping them in your plant nursery ensures that you have not just wildflowers, but native wildflowers; in your case native to your very area.

Your participation in the "Trees on the Land" project once more highlights the effectiveness of your group. Your knowledge that some areas were too wet for your trees, so instead adding these to your tree nursery for later use, means instead of this just being a tick the box exercise you have made certain that this project will have a greater success in the future. Certainly include the continuation of this project for next year.

Your new welcome sign invokes the Slieve Bloom mountains in the background. This ties in very well with your work to help a local land owner develop a historical pathway to a summit of the Slieve Bloom. While providing a potentially excellent recreational facility, this conservation project should have great environmental benefits.

While your extensive expertise in this area is obviously admired, what has to be respected even more highly is your commitment to bring along as many people as you can to your way of thinking, encouraging them by example to use the methods you use in protecting the environment. The woodland area where the children can see some of your projects in action, your membership of Community Gardens Ireland, highlighting to farmers the benefits and possibility of growing food organically, providing and help and assistance wherever it is required, whether that is gathering information for the National Biodiversity Data Centre or providing help to the beekeepers. You truly are eco-guardians in your own community.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

The re-use of materials appears throughout your application form and not just in this section. Your appeal on Facebook for various items, the use of stone for a wall at the bottle bank donated by locals demolishing the shed, supplemented by donations from a local stone company. The use of cardboard mulching required a huge array of cardboard for your orchard garden. Your saving of seeds and cutting. Your plant nursery encompasses many waste saving techniques. This includes not wasting money as the cost base is kept down. Your home produced composts, your recycled and repurposed plant container and use of rain water for watering. These are just a few examples that you highlighted throughout your report. The use of the baby gates in the poly tunnel to keep out animals was particularly admired!

Your Vintage Sale highlighted that one person's clutter is another person's delight. In your tool library project your group has taken this idea to a higher level. Having someone skilled to fix broken tools and manufacture handles from bits of timber ensures that the sentimental items can be passed from one generation to the next. Your work in promoting the use of the Local Bring bus is simple yet effective. All of these are examples of projects where community and environmental goals can be achieved together. While you mention the need to change their location, the bring banks were gleaming on day of adjudication. Educating your community seems to be at the heart of a lot of your projects. Not content with solely growing your produce, your aim to increase awareness of reduced food miles, and your organic growing methods show the benefits of food produced without chemicals and - as has been highlighted as a major area of concern - without packaging.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your efforts to keep your village litter free are working to great effect. However your public litter bin could itself be cleaned.

Thank you for highlighting your work with the County Council to declutter and fix your road signs. The "Before" photo helped here.

We note with interest that following your participation in the Laois County Council dog fouling campaigns, there was a marked improvement in your area. This is very heartening to see as it is not always the case in other areas.

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

The housing estate of Ard Erin was admired. The link between the village and the estate ensures great continuity. The houses here were very well maintained.

The house opposite the old church with the bright green door was one of the many that impressed in your small village. It was simply stunning and complemented by the stone wall.

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

Your new village sign on the entrance to Camross echoing the same stone as is used in your village is great touch. Again the use of photos to show the "Before" situation emphasises the result.

The planting here is to be admired. The sustainable shrubbery looks well.

The narrow bridge might cause a few headaches for traffic, but it provides a lovely feature. The wooden walkway to the side currently looks well. The only thing that brings this area down a bit is the black and yellow barriers that need to be painted. Or you could consider replacing these with hedging if it is deemed suitable.

Concluding Remarks:

Where do we start with our overview of Camross? Your well-presented village was much admired, but this was trumped by the information in your submission. Your passion for your work in the care of your environment and in sharing that work with others was obvious. What was also obvious is that this commitment is backed up by the knowledge and expertise to make that difference. Not only do you have a voice in your own community, your interaction with other groups gives you a voice in the wider community. We are certain that it is being heard. We wish you well in your continued endeavours in the Tidy Towns competition.