

# Tidy Towns Competition 2018

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castletown** Ref: **409**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **323**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **29/06/2018**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2017</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	50	51
Streetscape & Public Places	50	41	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	48	49
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	32
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	58	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	40
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>319</b>	<b>323</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Castletown (Baile an Chaisleáin) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. As previous overall winners, the Tidy Towns competition seems to be at the core of your community activities. It is amazing as the competition celebrates its 60th year that you are now seeing new members representing second and even third generation involvement in Tidy Towns. You mention that this has led to the option for some of your more senior members to bow out of the physical work. It is great to see this inter-generational passing on of the baton. It is even nicer to hear about your system whereby neighbours voluntarily provide assistance to old and less able-bodied members of the community with upkeep of their private property frontages. This is Community in action.

At a time when some Tidy Towns groups are finding it difficult to recruit volunteers, your committee appears to be going from strength to strength, including help from new Irish residents. Your three year plan that you have included shows that you have great sense of direction.

Your list of alliances with agencies and businesses is equally impressive. You must be a very welcoming committee.

Your Facebook page included a post this summer on a Castletown Community Planning Workshop, seeking help from local groups and individuals to draft a new plan for your area. We look forward to seeing the results of this project in next year's submission.

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

The old mill dominates an amazing view and continues to look well. On first glance it looks like it is in use; the red shutter windows stand out brightly. When you look to the right from the village side and see those that are not yet renovated, you truly appreciate the difference your work has created. There is a striking facet of your physical heritage, instead of something that could so easily be an eyesore. Your submission mentions that these works are being carried out in a number of phases to protect this building. As part of your three year plan you are hoping that the remaining facades of the building will be completed in the next six months (from submission date?). This is a very worthy project.

The bright black lampposts were looking well on the stone bridge. The number of stone walls that are kept in good condition in your village is impressive. These form a very important part of our built heritage. You mention that there is a need to repair the stone walls damaged by vehicles at accessing the village from the R445 about 3-4 times a year. We would encourage engagement with the County Council on this, if you have not already commenced this.

The murals painted on the two derelict buildings near the mill are very innovative, providing happy fun scenes. These scenes of country life bring spirit and humour to these boarded up buildings.

The continuity provided by the upkeep of the purple gates provides a very good impression throughout.

The community centre is obviously a very well cared for building (both inside and out). The painting on the doors was bright and fresh. The tarmacked area at the front was finished to a very high standard. The primary school itself is brightly painted. There is a lovely boundary wall in the playground. Unfortunately, this is patched up with breeze blocks to which the eye is drawn. In future, please consider the same material for any patching work. To remedy here, maybe consider planting in front of this as the rest of the wall looks well. The school railings to the front bring it down. The ones to the back are in better condition but could still do with some updating. The rainbow seat in the garden looks new and stands out prettily amidst all of the greenery. Miguel House was very lively, having an activity on here on day of adjudication with many youths taking part. It is lovely to see an older building still in use.

### **Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:**

You have a wonderful array of open public spaces that are well-kept. Castletown is in bloom. The quality of the landscaping in all areas is kept to a very high standard including near the village water pump. The centrepiece of your open space in the Main Square, surrounded by the mature horse chestnut trees, looks very well tended.

On day of adjudication your riverbank was alive with activity. There was a group using paddleboards, other swimming, others lazing around. Two bikes were spotted nearby. It is great to see this as the mode of transport for travelling around the village. This area is particularly well tended.

The picnic area is very well maintained, with the red flowers behind providing a dramatic backdrop against the old stone wall. There are a lot of seating areas noted all around the village. These always help provide focal points for community interaction. If public spaces are successful they are inclusive of the diversity of groups present in our towns and villages, and create a social space in which everyone in society can participate. Considering your success in this area we have to presume they are well utilised. Many were observed in use on day of adjudication especially near the playground.

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

Your awareness of the natural beauty that surrounds you is influencing your current planning. Your Riverside Nature Trail embraces this. Being aware of what you have and then supplementing it with extra native and indigenous shrubs and wildflowers is more important than buying new stock.

The flower beds throughout the village are very well planted. We are delighted to see that the planting in the centre of the village is moving towards more pollinator friendly varieties. If possible, it is advisable to seek expert knowledge on this. We see that you have done so.

One third of our bee species are threatened with extinction from Ireland. This is because we have drastically reduced the amount of food sources (flowers) and safe nesting sites in our landscapes.

Outside the school there is more impressive planting with striking pollinator friendly lavender.

Sometimes as an adjudicator you wonder if notice boards are informative and do they attract the attention from those you are aiming at. Two teenagers were spotted briefly looking at your bright sign down by the river on the way to their swim. It certainly draws the eye.

Your submission mentioned that you hope to recreate your wildflower meadow behind the community centre. It was not yet up and running at time of adjudication. There was some gravel left here. There was a strip mowed and the rest left wild.

We are pleased that you take note of the amount of water in the weir and how it effects wildlife species. We hope that the lack of water this summer did not cause issues here

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

The vegetable garden was viewed in the school and it is certainly well tended. What happens to the vegetables? Do the children get to take them home? It is a wonderful feature to have. Research has shown that not only is gardening educational, but that children also develop new skills and can learn about the environment and sustainability.

The weather around the day of adjudication was part of the very hot spell, but they were obviously well watered as they standing proud, including the lettuces.

The compost bin beside it was full. We would be very interested to know the amounts of compost that are made in the year. We note from your report that this is in addition to the Big Pig composter. Thank you for including the information that this is capable of composting all of the school lunch food waste in about six weeks. Awareness of how much energy savings are made is important to highlight.

The Green flag was flying outside the school. From their website we were made aware of the other environmental efforts that went into some of their projects. Some examples included 750kg of clothes recycled, 24 pairs of glasses for Sightsavers, and an Electrical Recycling drive.

In the school garden they tried to reuse and recycle as much materials as possible. Some of these were very simple, yet effective. The pallet fence for the school garden was treated with left-over creosote a variety of tins. We note that these pallets were installed by Tidy Towns and made from recycled pallets donated by a local hardware store Telfords.

They also show themselves reusing a barrel to plant their strawberries in. Hazel sticks were put up as supports for beans.

Remember to ask the school to submit a few bullet points of their projects for future submissions. The water butt was noted in the church yard. It is good to see you monitoring your usage of the harvested rainwater to determine the volume of your total water requirement for planting. You could however consider determining other uses for any excess water harvested in the future.

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

You are to be congratulated for the many measures you take to ensure a tidy appearance for your village. Well done on segregating your litter.

Your riverbank was certainly in use a lot this summer with the good weather. Your targeted litter clean ups here were evident.

Well done on your participation in Clean-up Laois Week. 15 bags of rubbish is a huge amount to be collected. Was most of this from the approach roads?

At the start of adjudication two workers were spotted having just completed a section of litter picking. The standard throughout the village was very high.

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

The houses and homes of the village contribute wonderfully to the village atmosphere especially around the village square.

The road up by the school has some lovely fine detached houses that are very well kept.

The row of houses leading up from the school to the church overlooking the main green area were very highly maintained. Even the bird box was brightly painted!

Churchfield house beside the estate of the same name was a lovely stand-alone house.

Churchfield estate itself includes nice maturing trees on a communal green area.

The old Gaelic script on the stone to St. Patrick's Terrace looked very well, but unfortunately there were a lot of weeds in front of it.

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

The approach road from the N7 was very well kept. The landscaping at the entrance with the Fáilte sign was particularly impressive.

The results of your programme of maintaining and painting sign poles was evident on all roads. However on the approach towards the school the "Caution Children Crossing" sign was partially hidden by branches of a tree. These should be cut back.

While the weeds were killed back beside the school they were not swept away and looked unsightly. We would encourage more organic methods of weed killing especially around this area.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

You get the strong sense of community here. This is an area that is very well cared for, and that doesn't happen by accident. One of your posts on Facebook in regard to the winter weather reminded people to "take care of yourselves and each other". You really nurture and promote community spirit throughout the year.