

# Tidy Towns Competition 2018

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Cullohill** Ref: **821**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **298**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **19/06/2018**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2017</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2018</b>
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	32	34
Streetscape & Public Places	50	35	36
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>298</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Cullohill (Cul Coile) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais.

The revival of Cullohill Tidy Towns committee six years ago certainly hasn't run out of steam! You seem to be going from strength to strength, which is a very good indication of a committee that has good structures in place.

Emphasising the social aspect to the group seems to be one of your biggest strengths. Your tradition of providing a cup of tea after work sessions certainly enhances this. Many hands do make light work, but in these busy days it must be difficult to get volunteers to commit to at least two hours per week from April. Well done on this. Getting retired members to work on a daily basis adds greatly to the work performed in your community. While you do not currently have a junior tidy towns subcommittee, the work that you highlighted that is done by the local school children is already of great value.

The use of web text has increased in recent years. It is always encouraging to see a group utilising this. Sometimes even the task of asking people to volunteer is a lot of work. This is an effective method of communication from time saving and resource saving points of view. Have you considered WhatsApp too? They allow for groups to see updates and replies so there's a bit of difference to web text, and they're free to send & receive for anyone on WiFi.

We were happy to see recognition of the physicality of the work sometimes involved in Tidy Towns as great exercise. In a world where we are increasingly told to get more active you are in a win-win situation. Improving your community while improving your own health, and as you mentioned forming lasting friendships, has positive results all round.

Last year's adjudicator asked you to provide a Tidy Towns plan. You have gone one step further as you secured funding by LEADER for a community development plan. This is a great link-in, as the purpose of the plan is to identify what needs to be improved in Cullohill, and what are the opportunities within the community that can be developed. Your three-year work plan highlights the outcomes that your Tidy Towns group can achieve. Your community is at a very exciting stage. While your group has provided a great base to work from, the plans to increase the appeal of your village both as a place to visit but more importantly as a place to live have been given a great focus.

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

Your works on the advice of last year's adjudicator were noted. Thank you for including these in your submission to ensure you get credit for the work done.

Your heritage buildings provide you with an amazing built environment inheritance. Cullohill castle is obviously the most impressive of these, but is ably assisted by your medieval church ruin and the Lime Kiln. The information

signs here were short but effective. It is a truly spectacular area. They are hidden gem just metres from the Dublin-Cork road.

We noted the signs for the nature walk and kiln area and eagerly followed them.

You describe your national school as being at "the heart of the community". The well maintained building and grounds are testament to important role it plays.

Your attention to detail is commended. At the Catholic church the green door looks well, the light green of the church is complemented by the dark green capping on the old stone wall surrounding. This is a fabulous setting for a lovely building. The gates also looked well maintained.

It is wonderful when older buildings find a new lease of life. This is true in the case of your Community Centre. The former school building retains its position as a focal point in your village. The window boxes here were admired.

It's amazing for such a small village the amount of stone walls that have been kept and are so well maintained. Dry stone walls are very much a part of your built heritage as well as providing a valuable natural habitat.

The school wall was notable too, as it kept to the traditional style, even if not in the traditional stone.

The old pump on the way to school, again decked out in the green and red, complements your theming.

Dalton's Cullough was a very well maintained area and litter free, though it would benefit from some planting to soften the area.

The birch trees were noted just after the 60KM sign and should mature nicely here for the future.

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

The rockery at the Bring Banks is beautiful example of perennial planting. The information signs are clean, bright, inviting and well maintained. Well done to all involved in the maintenance here.

Going from the main street area up beyond the Bring Bank area is like stepping through a portal. The feature which stuns the most is the stone work. As mentioned above, your heritage buildings are very impressive. They are enhanced even more by the well maintained areas around them. The picnic area near the castle ensures that many can get to view and appreciate the scenery here with plenty of space for kids to play around. We were unsure if the well maintained area in the castle grounds was public or private.

You should be very proud of the Millennium Garden project. If supplementary information hadn't been included, it would have been hard to appreciate all the work that was done. Highlighting that 130 man hours were spent bringing this back up to your standard after the parish council felt they couldn't take responsibility anymore, highlights the value of the work your Tidy Towns group plays in your community.

The garden at Parknahown is an oasis of calm beside a busy road. The maintenance here is wonderful.

The shrubbery just beside the Topaz garage softens what could be quite a stark area. We note that lavender has been planted here. As lavender is an excellent pollinator plant, this should be encouraged.

The milk churns and planting at Ballyvaughen is a wonderful echo to the surroundings.

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

Your work in the area of biodiversity was noted in the new fruit trees that were planted at the school and other projects that were listed on your submission.

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

Everyone can play their part in small simple ways. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan gives guidance to all, from farmers to local authorities, to schools, gardeners and businesses, to come together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive. <http://pollinators.ie/communities/>.

You are further advanced than other groups with your bee keeping courses and bee hives. Feel free to include what you note from the increased pollinator planting or from any other methods that you feel have a direct effect on your beehives.

Pollinator friendly perennials have the added benefit of generally being more cost effective. They have a potential life span of 10-12 years if properly maintained. Small amounts of annual replacement can supplement as well as complement plants already in place. For assistance in this category you can also check out <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie>

The school grounds were a hive of activity, obviously helped by the projects you listed in your submission that your group assisted in to the tune of approx. 60 hours.

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

Considering the summer that has just passed it was heartening to note that all water used by the committee this year for washing or cleaning was rainwater harvested. 40,000 litres is a huge amount of water to be saved. If the school agrees to set up a rainwater harvest for use in the school, this could increase even further next year.

Thank you for including the figures to show the recycling amounts achieved. Keeping track of this can highlight to the group the effectiveness of your recycling program. Remember to pass these details on to the wider community but be sure to remind people that recycling is at the bottom of the pyramid, after reduce and reuse.

In Tidy Towns if you're trying to promote real change it can't just be a tick box exercise. We are very happy to see that the recycling list wasn't just put up on the wall, but explained to the children in the school followed by a demonstration and how to segregate waste properly. This is where real change can happen.

You mentioned that information is sent home through the school either as a flyer or through the class Dojo message board. Technology in schools seems to be playing an increasingly important role we would love if you could highlight which method you find more effective.

Remember to include in future submissions the details of any projects the school children perform, especially in relation to their green flag if they decide to go for it next year.  
You might get some handy tips on <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/> and on the Tidy Towns website.

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

Your weekly litter clean ups, in addition to your participation in a “Monster” tidy up during Clean Up Laois Week, are having great effect. In general the village was very clean. There was a small bit of litter on the approach road. It looked like fly-tipping.

There was no litter observed around the Bring Bank area. Having checked them, they are well utilised. While litter control is an important basic element of Tidy Towns it is always great to see schoolchildren involved in other projects. The painting of the gates with the local colours of red and green on the approach roads was observed to great effect.

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

Along with many areas in Ireland you have legacy derelict buildings. The building opposite the pub is For Sale. Hopefully this will be revitalised in future. You have taken remedial measures for the roofless house opposite the Community Centre.

Your report mentions that some of the old cottages on Durrow road were washed and painted. Remember to include a “before” and “after” photo in future submissions.

You have some lovely examples of traditional style farm buildings. The grey doors on the farm just down from the church look amazing. The attention to detail in your village extends to all areas.

The impressive farm house near the castle has a wishing well in the garden, in addition to what appears to be restored old farm machinery placed amongst some restored farm out buildings. Is the machinery for viewing? The footpaths were well maintained.

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

The signs were generally in very good order. The 60 km/h sign on the left coming into the village from the Cork side was a little bit dented but not significantly. On the approach road going towards Durrow the sign here is simple but effective and the small planting enhances it.

Due to the length of the approach roads to your village we can see why so much time is necessary to maintain this area. Well done to all involved.

The farm gates on the approach roads with uniform colouring of green and red gives a consistently striking impression, imparting a sense of place and belonging. This truly is a worthy project. Having seen a green and red flag flying proudly in the school grounds we can assume that these are your club colours! The purple and black gate with what seems to be wheels was equally impressive.

The biggest issue your community currently faces appears to be that of accessibility, due to the spread out nature of your village. We would certainly encourage your plans for a pedestrian crossing and an increase in footpaths.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

From an article on your Development Plan you are described thus: “Cullohill as a village and a community has many positives, its location, its natural environment, existing heritage, walking trails and a community hall with scope for development.” They should have included that one of your best assets is your Tidy Towns group, and your willingness to work for the betterment of your area. We are sure that the future of Cullohill is very bright and we wish you well in your endeavours.