

# Tidy Towns Competition 2018

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Stradbally** Ref: **420**  
County: **Laois** Mark: **303**  
Category: **C** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	40	40
Streetscape & Public Places	50	40	41
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	44	44
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	54	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	38	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	35
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>303</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Stradbally (An tSráidbhaile) Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais.

Welcome to the 2017 National Tidy Towns Competition. It is heartening to note that your work with all of your local groups helps keep the idea of community focus instead of individual focus alive. From your website you declare that your mission is to make Stradbally a better place to live. This is a very worthy ideal.

As adjudicators we want to ensure that we give credit to all of the work reported on by Tidy Towns groups, either carried out by the Tidy Towns groups themselves or by reflecting the work that is carried out by others within your community for the betterment of your area. As per the last two years adjudicator's reports, we really feel that you would benefit from a three year plan. It does not have to be professionally done up. Just a page with the three years 2019, 2020, and 2021 and a few bullet points under each. Alternatively have a table showing if the project is new, ongoing or a future project. It is usually satisfying for Tidy Towns groups to see at a glance all of the work that has been carried out in one year.

It was difficult to reference the locations of all of the projects from the map. A simple numbering system would help here. Unfortunately your submission was difficult to read in places. Using bullet points would assist in this regard. The idea is not to criticise but to try and provide feedback to ensure the maximum return for your huge efforts.

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

Your Main Street provides an impressive view of traditional small town streetscape. The street is wide as are the footpaths, which are free from clutter. You have an impressive array of built inheritance in good condition such as both the Catholic and Church of Ireland churches.

As per your report there are a number of derelict buildings. Your area is not alone in experiencing this phenomenon. From your submission it is clear that you are keeping informed of the situation with these. It is unfortunate that there have been a few setbacks. It does look like there are signs of movement. We noticed the Sale Agreed sign on the premises Ramsbottom. We hope that this will lead to revitalisation of this potentially fine structure. The large convent building opposite the Gala shop also has a Sale Agreed sign. Well done on painting the boards black to take the derelict look off the site while it was awaiting its new owner. Hopefully this will lead to a new chapter in your town.

The Top Service Station, while clean and tidy, would benefit from some planting to soften this area.

The car parking area at the playground looked well after its renovations and added to the overall professional look of the area. The planting at the side is in need of some cutting back. The stone marking the opening of the area is obstructed by vegetation. An increase in general weeding needed here.

Parts of the old estate wall had scaffolding around it. Details of the maintenance/repair work could be included here. These stone walls are a very important part of your built heritage and are worth preserving. The wide path to the GAA grounds is a great link up with the nearby estates. Too often in Irish villages large and small there is a lack of continuity from the village to the sports facility. You might consider brightening this wall, even on part of it, as small bits of graffiti are appearing. The Laois Arthouse and Library is an interesting blend of old with new. The modern school, St. Colman's national school, was decked out in blue and white bunting, The Green Flag was spotted. It is great to see the old traditional building of Cosby's still in its original use for almost 150 years.

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

You can't visit Stradbally without noting that the restored Market Square is obviously well cared for. It is a credit to those involved in its upkeep. The planter boxes dotted around your town add some wonderful colour. The green area at Court Square is very well tended. Your work in caring for your mature trees was particularly notable here. The roses were looking well. In the heat of this summer they must have required a lot of resources. We saw the roses echoed in the flowerbed alongside the Laois Arthouse and Library. It is unfortunate that the flowerbed wasn't made out of a similar material to the stone wall behind it. The playground looks really well. The link up with the steam engine "full steam ahead" was a nice theming from your village. We are sure that the miniature train gets much use from your younger residents. The green area at the Droimnín Nursing Home is very extensive. The roses here continued the theme from Court Square. The as yet young trees should in time take the sparse look off the landscaping. This area would benefit from more planting. When planting trees, the long term view should always be considered, so ensure that advice is sought.

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

In the heart of the Irish countryside you are fortunate to be surrounded by so much of the richness of nature. The river beside the mill had many families of ducks on both sides of the bridge. The information sign looked well. The last biodiversity plan that we could locate for Stradbally was 2009-2012. Is this still utilised? Some new helpful information may be found on <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie>. Ensuring that your planting assists the Irish Pollinator Plan is an excellent way to start. You mention that walks and talks are provided around your lake area for the school children. More details on this topic would be beneficial next year. We noticed from their website that St. Colman's Students are currently working to achieve their 5th Green Flag on the theme of "Biodiversity". We are certain that your submission could include details of their work and knowledge gained. The lake is certainly an amazing resource. As it is maintained by the fishing club, we surmise that the club is providing a suitable environment to preserve the lake as a habitat. While the area around it does provide a healthy haven for pollinators as it is left wild, some information signs might ensure that some of the plants here are highlighted to help with their appreciation and potentially their protection.

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

It is admirable that you separate the waste from your litter pickups. We would welcome more information on the work you carry out with both schools to promote sustainability. We note from Cosby's school website that they have a school garden. In Cill Beg Manor estate ((We found from the internet this appears to be Cill Beg Manor )a lot of the houses here had solar panels on the roofs. We would welcome with interest any reports in next year's submission as to the savings achieved by these. Just a few lines would be sufficient. From our research we found that Stradbally had community allotments, but their lease appears to have expired this year. There seemed to be 25 allotments in total. Community Allotments throughout the country are increasingly providing social spaces for people. Community gardens can help reduce negative environmental impacts by promoting sustainable agriculture; reducing food transportation costs and reducing water runoff. They also create habitats and improve the ecology of the area. We hope that they are given an alternative location.

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

Your weekly litter patrols are having a great effect. There was not much litter spotted on the day of adjudication. There was some litter spotted in Oakglen estate and near the school. The area opposite St. Colman's school was quite untidy with a lot of overgrown weeds. Further out this road there were a number of pieces of litter spotted. We hope that the clean-up of the area would lead to less people littering here. Unfortunately some people feel that the weeds "hide" the litter and these areas are more often more heavily littered.

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

It is good to see so many of your traditional houses still occupied and in good condition. Some wonderful examples were viewed, especially around Court Square. The mill that was renovated into apartments beside the river must be one of the most impressive structures of your built environment. It would be wonderful if this could be replicated more frequently throughout the country. The area outside Killibeg estate has a lot of colourful flowerpots. Pick up after your dog posters were spotted.

Opposite the Stradbally cottages (located beside the playground) there is another house with solar panels. Was there a particular push in your area to encourage this? The house itself was lovely. The green sills are painted to highlight the windows. While the flower boxes looked well, they might be spaced a bit better to ensure that they don't cause an obstacle when walking by.

The houses in the housing estates on the Carlow road were in good repair. Unfortunately an estate sign was not evident. ) Unfortunately Cill Beg Manor didn't have an estate sign in evidence". The houses are enhanced by the nicely maintained green areas and trees. However they are let down by the stone planter boxes that are not currently in use. The residents should be encouraged to think of a use for these. Liaise with Laois County Council to ascertain what works in other estates. We also encourage the use of native pollinator planting as per your pollinator plan.

Opposite the Glebe Housing estate are some very impressive detached houses. The Glebe estate itself had a picnic table in the communal area, which is always considered a good community asset. In general more opportunities for community engagement leads to better community interaction.

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

We were surprised to note from your submission that all flower beds and welcome signs are kept clean and planted each year at the cost of €3,000. This seems to be an excessive sum for these tasks. Is there any way that part of this could be carried out by volunteers and the money used for other schemes to improve your town? The flower beds were all well maintained and the colourful planter boxes themselves added to this.

The sign on the way from the Portlaoise side, while clean, didn't project much above the vegetation below. There were a lot of notices on the approach roads advertising events, community concern projects and commercial advertising. Please try to keep these in check. You could consider a community notice board to cut down on the amount of signage.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Stradbally is continuing to provide a home for some of Ireland's premier festivals, Electric Picnic and the Steam Rally. This puts your village in the spotlight. Thanks to the work of your committee your village shines in that spotlight. We wish you well with your continued improvements.