

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bennettsbridge** Ref: **997**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **252**
Category: **B** Date(s): **02/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	37	39
The Built Environment	50	32	35
Landscaping	50	37	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	17	18
Litter Control	50	33	33
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	5	5
Tidiness	30	17	18
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	33
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	245	252

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome Bennettsbridge to the 2013 National Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for your detailed submission including your annotated laminated map which made finding areas of interest an easier task for the adjudicator. Well done in keeping up your media profile as this is a key way to get your message across, as seen from the enclosed press cutting and the number of friends on your facebook page. Although recently formed, you seem to have a healthy number on your committee and enjoy lots of support from the community as demonstrated by the high level of support you garner for the numerous activities you undertake. As a group you also have a well structured approach to gaining support from various businesses and agencies in the village, be it sponsorship or of a more practical nature. Well done in developing a three year plan, this has gained you more marks in this category. Perhaps it may help to break down your projects into short, medium and long term goals. Your plan should set out the work that will be done for each year of the three year plan. The plan should then be reviewed annually and it can be very satisfying to be able to mark off the projects you have completed and see where you need to focus your efforts over the coming year. We have found that villages that do well in the competition tend to be the ones who have an ordered approach to their works. Have you considered establishing a web site for the village? You could publish a link to the new village plan on a website to let the community as a whole see what your objectives are and maybe have a section where residents can suggest areas they feel could do with some input from your group.

The Built Environment:

You have a lovely village with a very neat core area and a number of historic sites and buildings of interest including the unusual castellated Garda station which has benefited from the communities interest. Your efforts at liaising with the OPW has resulted in essential upkeep and maintenance being carried out, a great example of a community taking ownership of a key village building. Without a doubt your most significant effort this year in this category has been the opening of the playground. This is a great achievement for you and was full of happy kids on adjudication day. Well done to all for your efforts here. We noted the improvement in the appearance of the Health centre and hope to see it painted for next year. The removal of old signs are also to be applauded but there was one more yellow and black empty sign post at the school car park which should also be removed if no longer needed. The yard at the creamery and the planted pots here were looking neat, it is useful sometimes to enclose before and after pictures of clean up projects so the adjudicator can get an idea of how much work was undertaken. Although the door to the old stone building opposite the yard could do with a coat of paint. Once

again the school and church grounds, along with the grotto were very well presented. The metal mesh gate to the yard on the other side of the bridge could be screened with infill panels perhaps, to screen the debris in the yard from public view. This would improve the approach to the village from Mosses pottery, housed in the lovely old mill building.

Landscaping:

As part of your three year plan we would encourage you to develop a landscape strategy for the village. In this you can map the mature trees in the village, which you talk about under the woodlands trees and hedgerows section of the plan. It is clear that you have an understanding as to the value of the mature trees you are lucky enough to have in and around the village. The range of horse chestnut trees present must promote great conker competition amongst the village children during the autumn. By mapping the existing trees you can then plot where new tree planting can be concentrated to complement these. In addition to trees, hedgerows form another important part of your landscape. Consider establishing a hedge to the road side of the post and wire fence to the field boundary between the bridge and Mosses Mill to improve its appearance. Other groups have approached the Landscape Architect with Kilkenny County Council to visit their village to advise them on how best to maintain and develop the overall village landscape. Remove tree ties on newly planted trees at the Ring and Woodlawn as they can damage a tree by rubbing and causing wounds to the bark if not removed. Planters throughout the village were well maintained and generally weed free.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You are lucky to have an expert in this field in your group and the training you have undertaken shows you have an understanding as to the importance of this category. Sometimes the most important aspect of action in this category is understanding where no intervention is the best way to protect habitats. We look forward to seeing progress over the coming years based on the initial actions you have outlined in your enclosed biodiversity action plan. It is a good idea, as a first step, to have carried out a habitat survey with species observed and listed, as it is an important baseline for you. As you carry out work over the years you can then use future year's surveys to see if any actions have encouraged numbers or additional species to your locality. The riverside and the walk were a delight to see but the non native conifers alongside the bridge here should be removed before they get too big as they are not appropriate species in this sensitive habitat. The painted railing was noted. The actions and goals coming from the biodiversity plan should be fed back into the overall village plan, again broken down into short, medium and long term tasks. This is a category you can really gain marks in.

Litter Control:

You have a structured approach to litter patrols and very little litter was noted in the village on adjudication day so well done in your efforts here. There was a small amount of litter before the town sign on the approach from the N9, no doubt thrown from a passing car. Is a bin needed by the picnic benches in the playground?

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

As you are aware this category is about more than the control of resources it involves the prevention of waste in the first place and the conservation of resources. You have made a good start in this category by encouraging recycling initiatives. Follow on with addressing the issue of composting or water management in the community. Do you compost all your cuttings? Can you install water butts to community buildings to help care for you village planters? Look at simple ways you can start to address this issue. Do you take part in the Cycle to School Week or the Earth Hour? These are all low impact schemes which you can plug into and can help you gain marks in this category.

Tidiness:

A number of bikes from touring cyclists were parked against walls in the village. Have you considered placing bike stands placed near the old village pump by the steps to the river? If parking space could be sacrificed here it may solve this issue. The artificial flowers by the creamery milk pail feature were also looking faded and should be removed. We note your efforts at removing old poles, well done on this. It may be useful to do a review of the town signs in the village. How many visitors stop by the roadside to view the information sign by the mill over the bridge from the village? May this be better placed by the old pump area to create a feature area here for cyclist and walkers to stop and have time and space to best view this. We do not want to encourage more signs in the village, as there are already quite a few, but perhaps they could be better placed? The small ESB building by the Garda station looks a little tatty in comparison. Perhaps it could be painted a muted grey or green colour to reduce its impact in this sensitive location besides such a fine historic building.

Residential Areas:

The standard in this category was very good so well done to all residents. The seat at the Ring needs attention but otherwise the green was well maintained and as mentioned previously, remove those tree ties! There is certainly an opportunity to have more trees planting to the open spaces at Hill View. This could be done in conjunction with National Tree Week with the residents perhaps 'adopting' a tree to ensure it is well watered for the first one or two growing seasons and they can take responsibility for removing the tree tie once it is established.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The standard of verges and approaches to the town were good with road signs for the most part clean and legible. Remove the artificial flowers and trim back the hedge by the sign on the road from Kells. The bridge is a lovely element in the town and was simply presented. The rails within the car park at Mosses pottery seemed out of place in a rural setting. The car park here could be improved and tidied up and the roadside raised box planters were not being maintained and left a poor impression.

General Impression:

Bennettsbridge is a busy community in relation to Tidy Towns and has made considerable progress since your re-entry to the competition last year. As a first time visitor to your village the sense of community pride in your area was very evident by the works on the ground. Well done to all involved in this year submission and we wish you continued success in 2014.