

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Edgeworthstown** Ref: **714**
County: **Longford** Mark: **253**
Category: **C** Date(s): **21/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	38
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	34	35
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	31	32
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12	13
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	21	23
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	27	28
TOTAL MARK	450	244	253

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte romhat Meathas Troim! Welcome Edgeworthstown to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 17 members which is a very good representation from the community. You hold nine meetings during the year. You are assisted by official and local agencies/bodies and businesses. Your communication methods are both modern and traditional. In this way you reach out to a broad age group in the community. We hope that you also circulate minority churches in your area. We liked the idea of your certificate for young people who commit to six hours of volunteering with you. The competition sponsored by the Credit Union has an interesting topic this year. This involved imaginative use of discarded family objects. You are a relative newcomer - at six years - to the competition, but have been making great improvements during that period. You have a good tradition of working with other groups in the town - particularly the tourism interests.

Thank you for your map which had projects sequentially numbered in parallel with sequentially numbered projects in your Entry Form - as requested in the Guidelines. However you did not show or name your housing estates. We thank you for your Plan which was clearly produced. We note that you have a plan for three years, but you have only submitted the plan for the year 2015/2016. We would like to see the full three-year plan as well. Firstly we would like to see how you achieved in relation to your plan for last year, and we would also like to see what the longer term objectives are. It is also a worthwhile exercise for yourselves to check on progress, and to confirm that your plans into the future are still achievable. Perhaps you do this anyway, but it would be good to let us see this ourselves.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Well done on cleaning and painting the five buildings in the town and thank you for the relevant photographs. We are delighted that you have worked with the Town Development Association to acquire the Rectory building, which is of significant historic literary interest, as well as being an architectural gem. Well done on selecting appropriate signage for the Maria Edgeworth Literary Trail. The hanging baskets and notice board repair projects listed under this heading really belong to the Landscaping and Tidiness categories respectively and we credit them likewise. However, we would encourage you to choose in-soil planting in favour of hanging baskets into the future. Hanging baskets have their place in dull or rundown areas. They are not a traditional feature of the Irish vernacular town, and your street architecture should be able to stand on its own merits. Moreover inserting hanging baskets in older buildings can create damage to the fabric of the buildings. We credit the erection of the monument to the Fallen in the Great War here - under this category heading - rather than under Approach Roads where you have listed this project. We admired the new Fire Station with its landscaped surrounds and its use of Irish. The lateral wall here facing the approach road needs paint.

Shutters drawn down on shop fronts after closing time give a very defensive appearance to the evening/night streets, and do not look attractive, as well as making streets darker at night. We would encourage you to suggest to owners that the type of security shutters that can be installed behind window displays should be considered.

The newer row of shops along Pond Street is well presented, and we particularly admired the stepped roofs, the lack of ugly projecting lighting, and the restrained nature of projecting signage. Well done to those involved. We were a bit puzzled by the triangular recessed space behind a rusting red railing at the junction of Church Street and Pond Street. What is the significance of the display here - or is purely decorative? In any event views through the space to a rear curtilage drying areas should be screened, and the rails should be repainted. The gravelled bed and shrubs looked well in the space. The Hut Corner adjacent had too many front elevational signage. Well done on the use of Irish at the Library - but the building looked understated. Perhaps a repaint in a cheerful clean colour, and removal of window notices and window cill 'clutter' would help. The local engineer might also help by resurfacing the road in front of the Library. It is a pity that there does not seem to be space for a disabled parking space here. However, we know that there is 'better' in store for the Library in the new civic space mid-town - but in the meantime a little upgrading at the current site would be appreciated.

The Park House Hotel paintwork must have deteriorated a lot over the bad weather of the past winter. The building needs a complete repaint and overhaul. Its gable facing the town centre is particularly poor - as does the Post Office building adjacent. The clutter of signage - particularly at the Post office end looks very untidy. The ground floor of the Post Office building - by comparison - is well presented. The barbed wire on the adjacent nice green gate detracted from the gate. The Ulster Bank is a fine building and we particularly liked its Art Nouveau type railings. It is well maintained, but the gates to its rear curtilage and its high boundary wall to the rear need painting. Well done on the conservation of its timber frame windows. The Barber Shop and Patricia's Fashions were well presented. Rawle's Meat Market looked well, but had a lot of projecting light fittings. Flush down lighters are more discrete and do not interfere as much with shop front presentation. Duffy's Supervalu was extremely tidy and bright, but might benefit from less window advertising. The bookmaker's window was had a lot of untidy advertising/notices, and the walls need a touch-up of painting. Whereas the gift shop was bright and very clean it had a cluttered frontage. Quinn's Supply Stores is a very fine building at a strategic entrance to the town - but again is somewhat spoilt by the clutter of signage on the railings in front of the building - unrelated to the business itself. This must be of some concern to the owners. Another place where a clutter of door /window signage detracted was at the good Fairgreen Recreational Complex building. Posters on the 'arches' of Costcutter facing Bracklyn Road look untidy, as did the signage at the entrance to the adjacent car park. We admired the rounded buildings at the street corner of Main St. and Pond St. We also admired the two - as yet unoccupied new classically simple shop fronts on Bracklyn Road (Joinery stairs and Doors) Projecting signage is extensive along Main Street and needs rationalisation.

We could have spent the day reading your most interesting wall charts including the relevant map -depicting a time chart for your town. What a lovely and informative idea! Will this become included in a permanent feature? We hope so! The surrounds of the stone clock building are not complementary to the lovely stone part of the building - but you can do little about that. Car parking encroaches on views to this street-end also. The interpretative town information board - in common with such generic boards throughout the county - is faded due to age. The Old Schoolhouse looked well and it is good to see that part of the site at least has a new use. A good traditional black gate to the Fairgreen was admired. We loved the modern curved public lights along the Fairgreen road (Ballymahon Road). They are slender and elegant. We hope that you will choose these for future appropriate lighting programmes also - as uniformity of lighting also looks well. The ironwork at Edgeworthstown House Gate Lodge is a magnificent item of your built heritage - as are the boundary railings. The latter would benefit from painting. The Catholic Church is a bit 'overcrowded' in its setting but was well presented. Perhaps parking directly in front on the roadside could be excluded to give it some visual 'space'. The Church of Ireland is 'tucked away' in a quiet enclave and was well presented. It is an important part of your literary heritage trail.

We visited the Railway Station and were interested to know that it is only one of two now open in your county. The approach roads are beautifully maintained and the station itself is well cared-for. We very much admired the beautifully detailed ironwork in the metal bridge. It is a very good example of railway architecture ironwork. A redundant notice near the gate should be removed - beside the lovely grey framed station name sign. We are sure that your guided walks (we saw the poster) will bring your built heritage - as well as your literary heritage to a wider audience.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You have a continual programme of maintenance throughout the already landscaped areas. You have also added a considerable amount of additional planting which you show on your map, and which we noted on our visit. Well done on all this time-consuming work. Each area you plant involves further maintenance and vigilance, but contributes to your overall good effect. Approaches to the town including the roundabouts are verdant and rich in their planting. Already we have mentioned hanging baskets. We would add that they are also high maintenance; the time involved in watering them being better spent dealing with sustainable planting and landscaping. They also are not conservative of water. Although you mention the planted embankment/professional advice that you have obtained, under Wildlife and Natural Amenities we will also credit it here.

The Fairgreen is a delightful area suitable for passive and active recreation. There were a lot of empty rectangular planters in a line at the Fair Green. Our Lady's Manor/Edgeworthstown House has excellently landscaped grounds.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:

The Biodiversity garden at the Fairgreen is a very accessible and visible place to locate such a project. We are glad to see that you are taking on board advice in relation to the development of this garden. We look forward to hearing about developments there. You have also taken advice in relation to the selection of native trees on the embankment project. But with regard to the latter you do not say as to whether this advice included advice on the specific wildlife attributes of the plantings. We admired the clean attractive wildlife signage at the Fairgreen. This included information on trees, birds and invasive species. We suggest that you contact your County Heritage Officer - if you have not done so already - in relation to assistance with work under this category heading. You might consult the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. Consider hosting some public events to bring your natural environment to a greater audience.

We noticed some incidences of chemical weed killing which you tell us you use under the Tidiness category. We would encourage you to desist as much as possible from weed spraying. Given the size of your town - manual weeding is probably difficult, but there are non chemical methods of weed control which we are sure your County Heritage Officer could discuss with you. Try to keep the chemical spraying to a minimum as it is injurious to the environment. We recommend that you include the railway station nests and bird population in your research in this category – subject of course to the station master's approval! Look up at the waiting room external verandah eaves when next you visit!

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

The compost collection at the Fairgreen contributes to allotment gardening. The school is involved with energy and water conservation projects. The schools' competition involved recycling this year. It is important to remember that recycling is just part of sustainable waste and resource management and comes a little 'down' on the sustainable waste and resource management pyramid. The idea is to try to prevent waste at source or at least to lessen it considerably. How do you convey this message to your community? Have you any plans to organise a workshop or demonstration? It would be a good idea to talk to the County Environmental Awareness Officer who would be able to assist you in moving forward with perhaps some surveys or auditing of progress in this matter. You might let us know the projects which led the local factory to achieving its environmental standard. Could that business encourage other businesses to research their own possibilities in relation to improving work in this area? Do refer to the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource Management - the updated version sent to you as updated Handbook extract. Perhaps the community might like to get involved in something like the ' Food Waste Challenge' You could - get some of the community to survey how much food they waste in a week! Check out the www.foodwaste.ie for guidance.

We have already commented on hanging baskets in the Built Environment and Landscaping categories. Perhaps your water harvesting might be better focused on harvesting for sustainable planting. Nonetheless we credit you with piloting a scheme that is contributing to sustainable resource management.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your Spring Clean which occurred early in March. Did you get assistance from the local authority in litter picking on the busy N4? Thank you for the photographs of same. You conduct a Sunday morning litter pick from March to September and over the Christmas period. And in May you carried out a litter pick on a black spot lane. You also say that you carried out regular litter picks in conjunction with the Town Development Association along the literary trail. How often do the latter litter picks occur? We would be surprised if these litter picks would lead to a litter free town in a settlement of your size. We saw a little litter on the Ballinallee approach road. There was a considerable amount of litter on the footpath on the Old Lanesboro Road and a scattering of litter on street opposite the Post Office. You have erected signage at the graveyard in relation to litter prevention.

The fact that you mention the certificates to young people under this category would appear to suggest that their work lies mainly in the litter control and tidiness aspect of your town. You have endeavoured to remove redundant fly posters and cable ties during the year. We only observed a single flypost opposite Beechgrove on the Granard Road.

Maintaining the children's playground on the Fairgreen is really a project under this category heading rather than under Residential and we credit it here. Well done on your notice board repair. We congratulate you on your neat weed-free footpaths throughout the town and generally on approaches also. A corrugated grey gate on Pond Street - (adjacent to good - and appropriate for the location - unusual wooden hanging floral containers = a good place to use hanging basket type planters) needs painting. Both plastic red litter bins (Tidy Towns/Supervalu) needed washing. Some of the green metal bins needed repainting. A small amount of graffiti was noted on a metal gate beside a pharmacy. Vertical wooden grey slats beside your interpretative long sign need renewal.

We agree with last year's adjudicator re location of the Bring Banks. The signage is faded and the receptacles themselves were very dirty, as was the capped wall - understandably as contents of bottles are dripping on the wall (when people do not wash out their bottles – which of course they should)! There were also some squashed cardboard boxes between the wall and the receptacles. The 'no dogs' allowed sign at the Fairgreen needs attention. We were surprised at the condition and lack of functionality - due to no scoop bags available - at the dog scoop panel near the Fairgreen. Some boundary walls and gates opposite the Fair Green on Ballymahon Road need attention. Some of the picnic tables at Jack's Corner on this incidental open space at an important entry to the Main St. need repainting.

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

There are very many very well presented houses throughout the village and on approach roads - such as a lovely clean 2 storey 4 bay (with side extension) house on (lower) Pond Street near the bus stop. Conversely there are a few properties needing attention - you know them yourselves. You are in communication with the local authority in relation to new and incomplete housing developments. 25 acres of green areas is a lot to maintain. We are glad that the TÚS scheme is helping you on this.

Well done to Crescent the estate awarded second place in the 2014 county competition.

Chestnut View had nice hedging along the roadside, but the estate name was impossible to see as one approached the town. It is only visible as one exits from the town, and it is set back quite far from the road. There was good fencing within the estate. Shannon Park access between raw security fencing on one side and unfinished rusting sheds with block walls looked poorly. The estate beside the ESB station on the Ballinalee approach was devoid of landscaping along the road frontage. The boundary wall had iron oxide staining and would benefit from cleaning. A second estate wall nearby also had a similarly stained boundary wall. The 'nameless' estate opposite the Ballymahon roundabout is pristine, with white houses and lovely trees.

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

You put a lot of hard work into removing moss from the traffic islands. Your maintenance of the pavements was noted and is commended. You maintain the grass verges on the approaches to the town and carried out a clean up on the Granard Road before Cemetery Sunday. Your remit is extensive - due to the number of radiating routes. High grasses around the large 60 kph signs on the Ballinalee approach need trimming. In fact the sign on the right hand side is almost obscured by vegetation. The village sign is sited on a good grass edge and has a flower box beneath the sign. This road sweeps nicely into the town and is generally tidy - although we saw a little litter here. We observed a few weedy set-back areas. Could the ESB station be screened somewhat in views from this approach? We saw a very derelict site at the 50Kph . The Dublin/Sligo etc. directional sign at Pound Street was very dirty. We noticed two derelict properties on the approaches by St. John's School.

On the Old Lanesboro Road sadly there was a burnt out house. We hope that there were not any fatalities involved. Nearby long grass encroached on the green and white town sign. The curtilage of the 'Redeemed Christian Church of God' needed trimming. Trimming was also required inside the 60 kph on the right hand side. C and D Foods were well presented. There was a considerable amount of litter on the footpath on this approach . The Autos sign needs repainting and the adjacent rusty security fence looked poorly. The paths were however weed-free.. The Old Lanesborough Road is the 'Longford Road' on nearby signage. This might be confusing for a visitor. Garage areas along the entry to the town need attention.

The Ballymahon approach has good roundabout planting and also along a timber fence approaching the roundabout. There is a vacant fenced site opposite a 'nameless' estate opposite the Ballymahon Road roundabout.

The Westport approach was well trimmed and had a wildlife corridor retained inside the trimmed area. We admired the well landscaped area at Goldsmith roundabout. But advertising should be removed from the roundabout. On the inner Dublin Road (near the Catholic Church) a gate on the corner leading to the apartments and fencing need attention. Views from the access area to the apartments to the rear of Main Street would benefit from landscaping/screening. A parking traffic sign at the parking area adjacent was 'headless'. The outer Dublin Road looked extremely well.

On the Granard Road approach the school is presently being reconstructed/extended - and we look forward to seeing the new buildings next year. Field gates on this and on all approach roads would benefit from painting - preferably in a uniform colour.

The road surfacing around the Main St., Pond St., and Church St. intersection is very poor.

Concluding Remarks:

Edgeworthstown is a very interesting place to visit. We look forward to coming back at another time as visitors to immerse ourselves in all aspects of your literary heritage - which also include associations with Oscar Wilde at your cemetery. This just goes to show how effective your work has been in attracting staycationers'. We hope to take one of your guided walks in the future!