

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Strokestown** Ref: **715**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **253**
Category: **B** Date(s): **13/07/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	34	35
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	32	33
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	23	25
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	43	44
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31	32
TOTAL MARK	450	243	253

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Strokestown to the 2016 Tidy Towns Competition. We are pleased to see that your dedicated committee of 6 members has built up good links with Roscommon County Council, the Department of Social Protection (Tus), the Town Team, Coillte and Strokestown Park house. Have the County Leader Programme been approached and asked for assistance? Well done also on supporting the Community Development Association and we hope that they do likewise. Given that your committee numbers are quite low for a town the size of Strokestown, why not go on a recruitment drive? We recommend that you start with other community and voluntary groups in the town as they can normally be persuaded to lend their support. Sports clubs, historical societies, active retirement groups and residents associations are normally a good source of new members and helpers. Bear in mind that some people will only have limited time to spare and may not be able to commit to joining your committee, but they may be willing to giving an hour of their time every week or every two weeks to help out on a project – so be sure to be flexible if offers of assistance are made. You should also approach local businesses to ascertain whether they are interested in getting involved in your work and helping out with your projects. We are pleased to see that you have included a range of communication methods in your communication strategy and this should help to attract new members. We are pleased to read that you are involving the Secondary School and the Primary Schools in your work and we urge you to further develop these links. For example, why not ask them to collaborate on wildlife, habitats and natural amenity or sustainable waste and resource management projects? They may also like to get involved in some of your landscaping projects. School children are playing a vital part in the work of many tidy towns groups in your county and around the country and this help should be harnessed to its full potential. Thank you for your completed application form and well done on following the advice of the adjudicator in 2015 with respect to same. Thank you also for your tidy towns which was read with great interest. We were surprised to see that the waste minimisation and sustainable resource management category was not included in the plan and we wondered if there was any reason for this?

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

There are many buildings and structures of interest in Strokestown and we are pleased to find that information plaques have placed on all of the key historical buildings of interest. These are most informative and the adjudicator spent an enjoyable afternoon visiting each one. It is a shame to see that many of these key buildings like the old Courthouse, the RIC Barracks and the Magnet are now in a poor state of repair and lacking productive uses, but we were heartened to read in your application form that Roscommon County Council are to renew their attempts to deal with the derelict buildings in the town and we hope that this fresh approach will yield some positive results. It is also hoped that the Coillte funded study of heritage buildings that is to be completed by August of this year will also provide some direction on what needs to be done. It is important to note however, that a number of the historical buildings in the town remain in good condition and active use such as the Church of the Immaculate Conception, the

Mahon Dower house (occupied by Peter Connellan Solicitors), the Geneology Centre and Sheehans Pharmacy. We are also pleased to find that many Community buildings such as Scoil Mhuire, St Mary's, the Community and Sports Centre and the Fire Station are in very good order and looked well during adjudication. We were struck by the high standard of presentation of commercial premises in the town and a number of very good commercial buildings stood out. On Bridge Street, we were very impressed with J Beirnes, Kennedys Hay Loft Bar, Hanlys, Sheehans Pharmacy, the Percy French Hotel and the Central Bar. Similarly high standards were achieved by Treats, Dusk til Dawn, Cut n Edge, the Sportsmans, Centra, the Cosy Cafe and McHughes on Elpin Street and we admired An Leabharlann, the Spar and the Westgate B&B on Bawn Street. K Leavys also looked well. The Mens Shed Kiosk at the roundabout is a wonderful addition and we urge the committee to engage in further collaborations with the Men's Shed group. The mural opposite the former RIC Barracks is an imaginative and colourful approach to screening a vacant site and we wondered if the schools were involved in this project? No section on the built environment of Strokestown would be complete without a positive reference to the wonderful Strokestown houses and gardens which are excellent assets for your town. The painting that the committee has undertaken to the courthouse and magnet ballroom, the shopfront to Christys Bar, Connollys shop and Reynolds shop front is also acknowledged and appreciated.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your application form reveals that your committee has been busy with projects under this category and this work was evident on adjudication day. We enjoyed seeing the improvements to the roundabout at the entrance to the town, with its neatly trimmed grass, neat beds of seasonal flowering plants and trees all providing wonderful summer colours on this important approach road into Strokestown. It is also commended on the very attractive landscaping bed of evergreen and perennial species that also accommodates a bog oak sculpture opposite St Mary's Primary School and we wondered if the school had any involvement in this nice planting scheme. The attractive landscaping at the junction of the N5 and the Roscommon road looked very well and we liked the seasonal flowering plants in the gravel base bed adjacent to the Texaco garage. These schemes all helped to create a positive first impression of your town on the approach from Longford. The trees that line Tulsk Road were also admired and the committee is commended on its use of colourful planters and hanging baskets at the square and on the bridge. We very much enjoyed visiting the new green area on the Longford road opposite the Texaco garage. It looked particularly well with its neatly trimmed grass, colourful seasonal planting (at the entrance), trees and picnic tables. The statues also added further interest. Unfortunately, we arrived too late to view Strokestown Park but we know from experience that this is also a wonderful amenity for your town.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fíadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

We were delighted to see that you followed the suggestion of the adjudicator in 2015 and that you carried out a survey of flora, fauna and other wildlife on along the riverbank in the town. We wondered if any of the schools were involved in this project? You are also encouraged to make the results of this survey available to the adjudicator in 2017 as its findings are likely to be very interesting. We are pleased to see that you have also undertaken some other projects under this category that includes providing a bug box at the Grotto area and that you have participated in the local authority pollinator award project. This sounds like an excellent initiative and we would encourage you to implement the actions that you identified in the 'Lets get buzzing' application form that you included with your submission – particularly using pollinator friendly plants in your landscaping schemes. Well done to the committee and the local secondary school for building and installing bird boxes in the grounds of the school and we would encourage you to monitor the usage of these bird boxes throughout the year and to please keep us informed on your work on the Swift habitat project for Strokestown. We also note from last year's adjudicators report that a wildlife area was planned and we wondered if there has been any further progress with this?

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

It is pleasing to see that a range of projects have been undertaken for this category in 2016 and they include engaging in water harvesting. We were surprised that the facility in Bridge Street was discontinued on health and safety grounds but well done on seeking a new facility as capturing rainwater for watering your landscaping schemes is a very effective way of minimising treated water usage. However, we also like to know what else the committee is doing to minimise waste and use resources sustainably. For example, are you engaging in composting and using the resulting compost in your landscaping schemes? We will also like to hear about how you source your plans for your landscaping schemes. Are they grown by the tidy towns committee or donated by keen gardeners in the town? Please let us know in 2017. Your committee should also consider using recycled materials in your landscaping and wildlife projects. For example, waste timber could be used to build planters, windowboxes or bird and bat boxes. It is great to see that the local schools are all participating in the green flag programme and this creates many opportunities for collaboration on future projects with the tidy towns committee under this category. You are encouraged to meet with the schools in order to identify new projects and to include these new projects in your tidy towns action plan. It is also noted that you have approached the local supermarkets and asked them to take part in the stop food waste programme. This sounds like a very good idea and we would like an update on this project in 2017.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The standard of litter control to be seen the town during adjudication was generally high with only small amounts of litter observed. Very small amounts of litter could be seen at the Fire Station, outside Brogans tractor sales and on the Kilmore approach road. However, all main streets were litter free and it is clear that your litter patrols which take place three times per week are proving effective and they are keeping litter levels under control. Your application makes no reference to your work on raising awareness of litter control and we wondered if you work with the

schools in getting this message across? It is noted from your application form that you have requested Roscommon County Council to put up antilitter signage on the approach road and this will help to remind the many passing motorists that littering is not acceptable. The standard of tidiness was also quite high as the majority of roadsides, kerbs and footpaths were weed free and appeared in good condition. Some improvements remain possible. The standard of signage is generally good but a small number of signs were spotted that were in very poor condition. The black and yellow road sign and pole directly outside Kildalogue Heights needs immediate attention and the same goes for the stop sign directly opposite the Garda station and a yield sign at the cemetery on the Kilmore Road. The entrance gate to the cemetery would also benefit from paint in time for 2017. A small number of verges along the perimeter of the car park in Scoil Mhuire were weedy and an untidy verge was also spotted opposite the Community and Sports Centre.

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

The standard of residential estates in the town was considered to be high with Kildalogue Heights setting a particularly high standard for others to follow. Here, the neatly maintained green areas, mature trees and colourful seasonal landscaping helped to enhance the appearance of this estate and demonstrate why it's been so successful in competitions at county level. The Commemorative Monument here also looked very well but we wondered if sufficient room had been left for the seven trees to thrive. However, other good estates were also observed and we liked Forge Hill and the green area and mature trees at the estate with the rather curious name of Vesnoy. It is great to see that many other estates are making a big effort despite challenges with respect to entrance roads and other issues. We were quite impressed with the work of the residents in the Maples estate and in the estate opposite (where no name was visible). We were unable to find the children's playground that is currently under construction and we would appreciate if it is included on the map with your application for 2017.

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

The standard of the approach roads into Strokestown is generally good, with a particularly high standard being achieved on the approach from Longford where good verge maintenance, weed and litter free approaches and tidy signage were evident. The approach from Tulsk also achieved a good standard and it looked very well. The approach from Elphin was quite good but the heritage sign for the town on this road was overgrown at the base and some untidy verges and poorly maintained signage was spotted on the approach road from Kilmore. Untidy verges could also be spotted on the road leading to the fire station.

Concluding Remarks:

Well done Strokestown on some good work for this year's competition! It is great to see that exciting projects are underway in a number of categories and we look forward to returning and seeing them in 2017.