

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Birdhill** Ref: **587**
County: **Tipperary(North)** Mark: **326**
Category: **A** Date(s): **12/06/2016**
08/07/2016

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	39	39
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
TOTAL MARK	450	321	326

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you very much for the filled up entry form plus the additional documentation supplied, and you are very welcome to the SuperValu TidyTowns competition. I enjoyed the photographs and thank you for including them. You have a good size of committee of 14 people, a reduced and restructured committee. I like the way that your sub-committees spread the workload. It is interesting to read you have got on board residents with particular knowledge, interests and skills that are able to extend further your links to the community. There is tremendous commitment shown by your members who attend all those meetings. It is wonderful to read about the way that young and old members of the community have joined you for all the community events. And it is very positive to have the links to the other groups in the community.

You are making great use of the agencies and bodies in the area with ongoing communication with Tipperary County Council environment section and local roads engineer. Good to learn that the County Council gave you an additional grant aid for your 1916 Commemoration, and we applaud the Community Tourism Diaspora Initiative assisting in bringing visitors to your annual summer event. You are fortunate to have assistance from the FAS employees and Iarnród Éireann, the Coopers and Matt The Treshers plus the manager of Appleglen. Good to see that The Credit Union, Dunnes Stores Nenagh, Tesco Nenagh and SuperValu Killaloe are willing to assist you.

The local people are well informed of your activities and you are using modern communication methods such as Facebook and Email plus texts. You have good contacts with the local school and great to read that a member of the staff of the local school is playing a vital role. It is great to hear that you run many competitions for the children and they in turn are involved in community activities in the park and orchard. You have a long and very successful association with the TidyTowns competition and fully deserve every honour that comes your way. Other projects listed make interesting reading. This is an excellent approach to the competition.

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

The Built Environment of Birdhill is quite small, but all of it is very well presented with the business premises in the middle of the village beautiful in every way, and a splendid mural of coopers at work. The Church of Our Lady Of The Wayside has its own particular charm, a splendid cut-stone structure with outstanding surroundings of trees, shrubs and an excellent defined car – parking area. I loved the small school, and the railway station, though small, is also well presented. The old Birdhill Creamery with its impressive mural stands out reminding us of the importance of milk production in this area, and a little stone plaque relates that it was founded in 1914.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Travelling down from the motorway the new roundabout contains some interesting old farm machinery in

well-trimmed grass and appropriate shrubs. No doubt this equipment was used in the lovely surrounding countryside with the patchwork of fields, hedges and woodlands that we admire in the background. The landscaping of this very pretty place is of outstanding quality with stretches of lovely well-manicured green open spaces, lines of splendid trees and a variety of attractive shrubs and flowers. Progressing up the road we see the Tidy Towns notice boards giving details of the recent successes in the competition. Delightful new beech hedging is noted on the right hand side further up. Some beautiful shrubs adorn the surroundings near the lovely raised stone flower beds and a few planters all suitably presented.

Up in the village core the trend of splendour continues with the business houses playing their part with colourful shrubs and flowers. Antique features such as the traditional water pump and old telephone box add to the interest of the surroundings. On the Limerick road the little water fountain stands out and around it there are some great public seats. Mature trees adorn the sides of the main road.

The landscaping of Birdhill certainly has that distinctive year-round effect, really professionally done. The village park has a beautiful entrance gate with a splendid walk through the trees, and interest is added for the visitor with the little name markers for the various trees. The tranquil surroundings of this imaginative park make it a great place for tourist and native to enjoy. The centre of the village is spectacular and I was delighted with the way the proclamation is set in a sturdy position. The cart-like granite seat is splendid for a rest to enjoy the surroundings and has detailed information on your great successes down through the years.

I was delighted to find the Railway Garden with the notice "A garden is a friend you can visit anytime". Inside there is interesting historical information on a free standing noticeboard giving details of Birdhill Railway Station being opened in July 1860 and so on. Then we enjoyed the mini plaques laid on the ground such as "For the credit of the little village" from Matt The Tresher written by Charles Kickham plus some other quotations like "If you have some time to fill, and want your thoughts to linger still, walk this way when e'er you will, and find some peace in sweet Birdhill". The garden reveals unexpected delights of landscaping at its best with flowers, shrubs and wildflowers bursting with summer life.

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

There is an abundance of all types of wildlife around your lovely village with your work over the years on this category now paying dividends with the likes of the Pollagh Trail where I love to stroll along down the path through the fields, read the information on the noticeboards and enjoy the fauna and flora of the surroundings. I picked up three brochures from the sturdy stainless steel box, "The Pollagh", "Birdhill" – a history of the village and "Birdhill Walking Routes & Heritage Trail" which added to the entertainment of the visit. The village park is tastefully designed with the path going round. The singing of the birds was joy to behold as I ambled along reading all the information contained on the little notice boards. I went up to the top past the well, containing a water lily, and read the story of the Twiss family, on past their gate with the timber cabin on my right. Then down to the compost area with the leaf composter. A notice of a white light, a tree propagated by John Buckley, and planted by the Taoiseach Bertie Ahern to celebrate Birdhill as Ireland's Tidiest Village. It was pleasing to pass along by new beech hedging. I enjoyed the wildlife information in this splendid wildlife haven. Now and then we see where the grass is let grow on to help the wildlife, and then there is the wooded area with the pathway cutting through the trees down to the railway station. Bird feeders and nest boxes are all supporting the wildlife, with a variety of birds hopping around in the tranquil surroundings, and then there were butterflies and bees humming and ducking in and out.

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

Birdhill bring bank located at the back of the Coopers is maintained to a very high standard, spotlessly clean and adorned with shrubs that make a big impact. I am very impressed with your local Energy Project, now in its fourth year and it makes for very interesting reading notably your holding of information meetings in conjunction with BER. The Energy Project has benefitted Birdhill community with funding for solar lighting for your information kiosk, and help to install solar lighting in the community park.

I was also impressed with your community allotments, community garden, community composter, perennial shrubs and flowers, leaf and grass composting, rainwater harvesting, stop food waste initiative, and of course the green flag initiatives in the school.

All of these projects combined show a great understanding and acknowledgement of Sustainable Waste and Resource Management. Congratulations on a great effort.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Everywhere I went was spotlessly clean and tidy with no litter found at lunchtime on a lovely Sunday afternoon. The nicely presented black rubbish bins stood out in great condition and were well serviced. I admire the approach whereby the in debt study was done by the transition year students to look specifically at litter control in the area and produced recommendations that can be implemented by your main committee where necessary. I admire the strategy of no fly posting in Birdhill with not a sign in sight. The bus stops are maintained in a tidy way and well done for providing the receptacle for the butts of cigarettes. Continuous weeding and the attention paid to flower, shrub and planters means a lot of work but the results are there for all to see. You have listed other valuable initiatives that I have read about and taken into account.

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

There are splendid houses in Birdhill on the main road into the village from the new roundabout, on the road to Broadford across from the railway, and again on the Newport road. I could see that your garden competition could be very hard to judge with the very high standard everywhere. Other houses have their own charm.

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

I found it a pleasant experience to travel around Birdhill now that the village has been bypassed. The wide open spaces at the side of the main road give good views for motorists. I loved the new roundabout so well presented with neatly manicured grass, the vintage farm machinery and shrubs and flowers. I admired the cycle lane into the village from the Nenagh side. Delightful displays of trees, shrubs, hedging and flowers adorn the roadsides. I saw where the traditional stone wall at the railway bridge has been tastefully repaired maintaining the style of the existing wall. The side roads are typical well maintained rural roads, and road signs are washed spotlessly clean

Concluding Remarks:

Birdhill is a beautiful village and so much loved by its proud residents. Congratulations for the sustained efforts to keep the area at such a high standard.

Second Round Adjudication:

First impressions are beyond good! Your well maintained roundabout displaying old brightly painted agricultural machinery and the neat presentation of approach roads set the tone for what to expect as one explores Birdhill. While you are entered in the village category of the competition, you enthusiastically care for and maintain a large section of the surrounding local area. Congratulations to the business owners at Matt The Threshers who put in great effort with the presentation, we believe from your Information Box that two individuals are retiring soon and its heart-warming to hear of the function organised to acknowledge their contribution to the Tidy Towns movement in Birdhill. We are pleased that the attractive neighbouring building is now home to the Coffee Academy. We noted your community garden and composter in this vicinity but the gates were locked so we could only look from afar. The Coopers, with its vibrant exterior, looks well and we liked the good use of climbers on some out-buildings. A gentleman was busy sweeping and tidying here and also taking time to sweep up around your Tidy Towns seat, which tells of all your successes and achievements in the Tidy Towns Competition to date. In other locations men were busy organising; turning the rotary composter; blowing leaves; and the like. Along the R445 Limerick Road presentation is to a very high standard with many notable planting features, wide maintained verges and we liked the wildflower area beside the water feature. The Old Co-Op looks well, enhanced with murals, old churns and flower tubs abundant with colour. The Church and graveyard both are immaculately presented and we liked how your careful choice of planting co-ordinates so well with the sandstone façade of the Church. The train station is one of the best presented we have seen on our adjudication travels. We could not fault your Community Park this year and we thank you for making improvements in the vicinity of the composters. The addition of the blue playhouse is a novel idea that will be appreciated by a young family on a showery day. This adjudicator really enjoyed your Woodland Path and Literary Trail, how apt the following quotation for Birdhill Tidy Village Committee: 'Those who can, do. Those who can do more, volunteer'. You have probably seen the idea of the Book Exchange or Free Wee Library on the EPA's Local Authority Prevention Network website: <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/> - this idea could work in Birdhill, particularly at the vicinity of the train station or at the Literary Trail. We enjoyed the Community Orchard and the information panel detailing some of the interesting findings during excavations prior to construction of the M7 motorway, relating to ancient local settlements, such as the prehistoric ringfort at Gortybrigane. We assume the close proximity to the Birdhill National School, facilitates for outdoor learning opportunities here. What an interesting initiative - an apple tree from each of the thirty-two Counties in Ireland - we looked out and found our Mrs Perry County and your adjudicator was delighted to learn that this was named after Mrs Perry whose daughter planted it as a pip. One learns something new at every turn when adjudicating the Tidy Towns Competition! While you have these wonderful landscaped amenities in the village and the Pollagh Trail, your adjudicator could not help but wonder about how utilised they actually are amongst the local residents. Therefore, we were pleased to read about your various community events such as the Stations of the Cross held on Good Friday and the Dawn Service on Easter Sunday, both held in the Community Park. In terms of litter and tidiness, the standard was excellent during your second round adjudication. Being pernickety I would comment that I have seen better presented bring banks in other high scoring centres and this is something you could perhaps work with the Council on in the medium to long-term. Your adjudicator was aware of your Energy Project which has resulted in large financial and carbon savings to date. You have many other fine initiatives such as the Love Food Hate Waste cookery demonstration. Coming up with other engaging ideas such as this is important to keep the momentum up under the Sustainable Waste and Resources Management Category of the competition but we have no doubt you are up for that challenge. We note that your Environment Champion, Aileen Campion, will be presenting on the 'Environmental challenges and successes - A local community case study from Birdhill'. Your adjudicator wishes you well showcasing your fabulous work at one of Ireland's prominent environmental platforms. We can garner from your application that your group acts a little like a glue for the community. Spurred on by Birdhill Tidy Village Committee many groups, businesses, organisations and bodies stick together with the common purpose of making Birdhill a vibrant place whose residents have great pride in their heritage and an appreciation of their local environs. Congratulations on another fabulous year.