

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Delvin** Ref: **1113**
County: **Westmeath** Mark: **237**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	32	34
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	32	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	29	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	23	24
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	25	26
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	29
TOTAL MARK	450	224	237

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Delvin to the 2016 tidy towns competition as your participation is appreciated. We are delighted to see that your hard-working committee of 8 continues to make progress in the competition and that you have formed productive partnerships with Westmeath County Council and An Taisce. It is also clear that the local community appreciate your efforts through their support at the Church Gate collection. Your committee is also encouraged to approach Fas or the Community Employment Scheme to ascertain whether they can provide resources or expertise for your projects. Have the County Leader programme been asked for support? Both of these organizations have provided invaluable assistance to other tidy towns groups in your county. Like the adjudicator in 2015, we would also recommend that you contact other community groups and sports clubs in Delvin to see if they would be interested in 'adopting' a project. We were very impressed with your communication strategy which relies on the Parish Bulletin, the village website and local press. As mentioned by the adjudicator in 2015, we wondered if you had considered using social media to contact the wider community in Delvin? It is great to see that your local school won an eco-friendly award and we would strongly encourage you to collaborate with them on environmental projects – perhaps one in the landscaping and open spaces or wildlife, habitats and natural amenities categories? Co-opting the school in your projects is a great way of demonstrating the great work that you doing locally and getting extra help. Thank you for your comprehensive application form as it was a great help during adjudication. Your hand drawn map was also useful. Consider drawing up a tidy towns action plan as this will help you to identify projects under each of the tidy towns categories and potentially earn you extra marks.

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

We are very impressed by Delvin and its many features of interest. The heritage buildings in particular are a wonderful asset for your village to have. Delvin Castle and the adjacent St Mary's Church are fascinating buildings and we thoroughly enjoyed reading about the structures from the information signage. We would also have loved to have visited Clonwyn Castle but we understand that that is not possible as it is now in private ownership. However the other historical buildings in the village – such as the church and the adjacent parochial house are also of interest and we loved the intact terraces of traditional style two-storey dwellings that line the Main Street. Have the committee considered setting up a heritage trail? Perhaps this is a project that could be discussed with the County Leader group? It would help to raise awareness of the many features of historical interest among local residents and visitors who pass through on the N52. The standard of presentation achieved by individual businesses and property owners was also high. The Caman Inn looked very well, while McCormacks, Gaffneys, Lenehans, Tierneys and the Coffee Boutique deserve credit for the appearance of their buildings. Further on down, the Blue Hackle and the Garda station impressed and we particularly liked the modern design of the handball club building which provides a welcome design variation in the streetscape. The school, with its fresh coat of paint, well maintained grounds and 4 green flags also drew positive attention. Congratulations to the committee for refurbishing the derelict house beside

the 'Camann' Inn and we hope that your application to have all wires placed underground is successful.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The efforts of the tidy towns group under this category were also visible on adjudication day. The timber planters with their seasonal plants on the approach looked well and they helped to provide extra colour at the entrance to your village. The planters at the junction of the Ballivor road and the approach from Dundalk also looked very well. We particularly liked the planting that can be found at the picnic area at the junction of the Mitchelstown road and the N52 as a good diversity of species has been achieved here. It was noted that your planting schemes are heavily reliant on planting boxes and seasonal plants and we would encourage you to consider providing permanent beds that accommodate perennials and evergreens – as this would enable your village planting to provide year-round colour. In addition, consider standardising the type of planting used throughout the village in the medium term – rather than using a variety of different planter types. The contribution of the individual businesses to landscaping was appreciated. The windowboxes and hanging baskets at the Camann Inn, Lenehans, Gaffneys and the Blue Huckle all looked very well. We note from your application form that it is planned to landscape the reclaimed area beside the mart and we look forward to seeing this complete in the years ahead.

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

The village of Delvin has some excellent natural amenities and habitats. We were interested to read about the recent reclamation of the area beside the mart and we look forward to seeing your future plans unfold on this site. The natural wildlife and nature reserve on the Athboy Road is a wonderful natural amenity and if we wondered if a sign could be provided for it? Why not carry out a survey of the wildlife that is found here? A survey of this area may provide an opportunity for your committee and the local school to collaborate on a tidy towns project. The resulting survey would provide the baseline information of the wildlife in the reserve and your committee and the school could then monitor the plant, animal and bird species that live in this habitat. You are further encouraged (with the assistance of the school) to identify projects that would help to enhance the reserve and sustain its biodiversity. Why not consider starting a wildlife walk? The survey information could be used to prepare information boards that could inform visiting members of the public and raise awareness of local biodiversity. This wildlife walk could be connected up to a heritage trail in the village (if one is provided) and with other walks in the area. We note that the adjudicator in 2015 provided lots of other suggestions for projects under this category and we wondered if any progress had been made on these? It is recommended that your committee discuss the ideas contained in this year's adjudication report as well as those in last years report with the school and provide us with an update of the projects that you would like to proceed with in 2017.

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

Your application form for 2016 includes a number of projects under this category that are very much focused on recycling and reusing items as a means of minimising waste. These actions, which include the Delvin Book fair, the Nama Shop, the recycling bank and sale of works are commendable as they are effective in reducing the amount of waste we produce. However, in addition to these actions we would encourage you to identify projects that can avoid the generation of waste in the first place. For example, when carrying out your tidy towns projects, consider harvesting rainwater to water your plants and making your own compost (thereby avoiding the need to buy fertilizer). Growing your own plants or using donated plants means that the packaging and transport impacts of shop bought plants can be avoided. Harvesting seeds and propagating your own plants for use each year is also an effective way of minimising waste. We also encourage tidy towns groups to raise awareness of the need to minimise waste and sustainably use resources in their wider communities. This can be achieved by organising information talks or seminars with your local Environmental Awareness Officer in Westmeath County Council. Schools are also normally keen to get involved. Why not ask them to do a survey amongst themselves of how they travel to the school each day and then identify practical and achievable ways of reducing the number of trips taken by car. Other ideas for projects under this category can be found in the Tidy Towns Handbook.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The adjudicator was very impressed at the standard of litter control observed in Delvin on adjudication day as the vast majority of areas were litter free. Apart from a small amount of litter on the Ballivor Road, on the approach road to Scoil Earnain Naofa and the playground beside the green, no litter could be seen. The standard of tidiness was also high and it was clear that your committee has been working hard with weeding, sweeping and removing weeds, cleaning signs and sweeping roadsides and footpaths – they all looked very well and this cannot be achieved without a lot of hard work! Your litter control and tidiness strategy appears to be very effective and like the adjudicator in 2015, we wondered about how you achieve this. Are there regular (i.e. once-daily, twice-weekly) litter picks? Do the school children get involved? Do you take part in the An Taisce Spring Clean? Please let us know in 2017. One improvement that is possible related to the planting bed at the entrance to the green. Once again (it was also in poor condition in 2015), this large bed was overgrown with weed and grass and we would strongly recommend that this area is tidied up in time for next year's competition. Also, could the hanging basket poles be used for next year's competition rather than left empty? We note from your application form that you are applying to have the overhead wires placed underground and we wish you every success in this project. It is disappointing to hear that a lot of the litter in your village is coming from cars and vehicles that pass through on the N52 and it is recommended that you speak to the County Council about effective ways of addressing this problem. Signage is part of the solution perhaps the National Transport Authority (who are responsible for national roads) can also be of assistance in this matter.

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

Well done on liaising with the Residents Associations of Lacura Glen, Castleview and Stoneyford on maintaining their estates as they generally looked well. Lacura Glen seems well maintained while the planting bed at the entrance to Castle View looked nice. Stoneyford could be improved by weeding the large bed at the vehicular entrance and removing the planning permission signs tacked to the boundary fence. The other residential areas at the Green and Cois Caislean are reasonable but could be improved by additional planting. No names were visible on the residential areas on the Ballivor road. We note your plans to approach the Council to improve the children's play area and paint the wall of the car park across from the church.

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

The approach roads into Delvin are generally in good condition with the Mullingar and Dundalk approaches on the N52 achieving the highest standard. The Athboy Road also achieved a good standard while the Ballivor and Castlepollard roads could be improved by more consistent verge maintenance. We were pleased to read that the committee intends to organise a litter pick night for the approach roads in the village and to encourage people who live along the approach to keep the front of their houses tidy. It is great to see that the stone walls of Delvin are recognised as being a key part of your heritage and that attempts are being made to rebuild them.

Concluding Remarks:

The village of Delvin is tremendously impressive and while considerable work needs to be done, significant progress has been made with a number of important projects now completed. We look forward to seeing further improvements in the years ahead and best of luck for 2017.