

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Horseleap** Ref: **295**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **244**
Category: **A** Date(s): **14/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	39	40
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33	33
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	30	30
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	18	19
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	46	47
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	33
TOTAL MARK	450	240	244

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Many thanks for your application to the 2017 Tidy Towns Competition. It's great to see Horseleap staying involved with Tidy Towns. You have a small committee but obviously a very dedicated one. Keep trying to recruit new members and hopefully your efforts will pay off. Perhaps some people will consider taking on particular jobs or projects if they don't want to join a committee or attend meetings. You might consider using social media (e.g. Facebook) to spread the word about your work and to encourage people to volunteer. Someone might take on this job for you. You collaborate with other groups in the village and several other agencies and bodies. You are placing particular emphasis on working with the local school, which is a great idea. Hopefully some pupils and parents will recognise the many benefits of being involved in a community development group such as Tidy Towns. Sponsoring a heritage expert to spend five days in the school is a fantastic way to raise awareness of the importance of the natural environment and a huge contribution to the school community. Thank you for including your three-year plan with your application, as recommended by last year's adjudicator. The map and photos were very helpful.

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

Horseleap has some interesting features and heritage buildings. Any news about the proposed information panel for the leaping horse? This could also include information about St David's Church and graveyard, the Motte and Bailey, old railway line etc. as suggested by last year's adjudicator. The Heritage Officer in Offaly County Council may be able to provide advice in this regard. Paddy Ryan's pub was very well presented and the building next door with its multitude of colourful signs and planters is certainly an interesting feature. The school looked very well. Perhaps some more trees could be planted around the boundary to the rear to liven up the playing area. The modern church looks well although a couple of large planters in front with colourful perennials could soften its appearance. The graveyard appears to be lightly managed and this is working well. St. David's Church is an important heritage feature and it's good to hear that the owner has been awarded funding for its repair. It should be possible to do these repairs and protect the nesting swifts. The owner should be encouraged to seek advice from the Heritage Officer and BirdWatch Ireland.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your approach with landscaping has been to consolidate the progress you have made in recent years, which is a great idea. It is important to replace dead trees. Only young, newly planted trees should need staking and the stake ties should be removed once the tree is well established. Most of the trees in the village look well and the hedgerows are well kept. Planters on paved areas provide some welcome colour. Keep monitoring trees and aim to plant some new trees every year. The central area with leaping horse, picnic area and roses etc. looked very well on adjudication day.

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

You have some great projects in this category- bringing in a heritage expert and monitoring nesting swifts. The survey of the River Gageboro in April 2016 was interesting and the results could be collated with previous surveys. Consider a new project based on the findings of these surveys. The school are to be commended for their enthusiastic involvement with these projects. It is also good that you are monitoring grass cutting of road verges with a view to reducing frequency. Mowing less in the summer months could be expanded on the approach roads. The wildlife area on the Clare Road looks a bit neglected. The meadow is quite diverse with many sedges, grasses and wildflowers but the planted trees are not thriving and the signage looks tired. This area could easily be improved by removing dead trees and updating the sign. Mowing the roadside edge would highlight the area and demonstrate that the meadow is being left deliberately. The local farmer could be encouraged to mow this area in spring or autumn and remove the clippings in order to maximise plant diversity.

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

It's good to see you are also working with the school on this category. Try to expand the work of the school into the wider community. I know you have a small committee but there is much to be gained from focussing on this category. Last year's adjudicator provide several practical suggestions. You could ask the Environmental Awareness Officer in Offaly County Council for their assistance, perhaps organising a series of workshops on composting, waste reduction, wildlife gardening etc. These events can raise awareness but can also be an opportunity to highlight your work and recruit volunteers. Take photos of any events to include with your application.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Despite your stated problems with the recycling bins, they were very tidy on adjudication day. Do keep working on a solution to illegal dumping. Keeping in contact with other Tidy Towns Groups on this issue is a good idea as another group may find something that works. The National Spring Clean is a great event for building community spirit. Your regular litter pick efforts are paying off and very little litter was spotted during our visit. Do provide more information on your litter control strategy as recommended by last year's adjudicator. Horseleap was generally very tidy and well presented. There are few weeds or excessive signage or clutter. The parking area next to the church is not very attractive with the rough surface. This is perhaps a longer terms project that could be included in your three year plan.

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

Residences in Horseleap are presented to a very high standard. Potential projects could include dealing with any derelict properties (e.g. Garden Centre) by planting or painting where appropriate to improve their appearance.

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

The approach roads to Horseleap look very well with the combination of well-maintained hedgerows and trees. There is some scope for additional tree planting and you have committed to do so. Most of the traffic signs are clean and in good condition. It is great to see no fly-posting. Do continue to leave some verges uncut as a habitat for wildlife. They will look beautiful in their own way as wildflowers colonise these areas.

Concluding Remarks:

Horseleap is looking very well thanks to the efforts of the Tidy Towns Committee and local community. It is challenging when you have small numbers but your efforts are visible and hopefully will inspire others to get involved.