

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mucklagh** Ref: **1947**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **257**
Category: **B** Date(s): **20/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	39	40
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34	35
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	33	33
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	21	21
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	45	46
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	450	252	257

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you for your entry to the 2017 Tidy Towns Competition. You have restructured the way the Tidy Towns Group is organised, which sounds like a really good way to work more efficiently. It is great to hear how the Tidy Towns Competition has engaged the local community and boosted community spirit. You are making great progress with your three year plan and already have a plan for the next three years. You have TÚS workers to help with your work and you collaborate with other groups in the village on projects. It is good to seek assistance and advice from the Heritage Officer and other experts or agencies. It's great to hear that the school are continuing to work on the green schools programme. This should be of great benefit to the school and the wider community. For next year, a one-page map would be easier to use for the adjudicator. A hand-drawn map can work very well, or you could use a 6" Ordnance Survey map as your base map. You included a good selection of photos and the before and after photos were most helpful.

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

Mucklagh has a long main street with many mature trees and attractive front gardens that catch the eye. Some trees could be replaced (as they are not thriving) and more trees could be planted, as you are doing. The school looked very well on adjudication day. It has limited green space but trees and hedging bring colour and nature into the playground. The graveyard and church are also well presented as is the nursing home. The shop is obviously a busy area and important community hub. There was little litter noted but some old signage could be replaced (e.g. Toucan). Planters can help to brighten up large tarmac areas but some around the shop looked tired and need replenishing. There is an opportunity to plant trees along the eastern boundary of the shop. The new shrubbery bed and decorative bench at Beechmount Park looks well. If you are planning to install more large beds, it might be worth developing a plan for the design and planting so there is some consistency and an overall theme. The decorative bench at the entrance to Lynally Grove is impressive. Before installing more benches, have a think about where they might be useful. The main street is long and the walk to the shop might be quite daunting for older people that live a distance from the shop. Could seating be installed to break the journey for those that might need a rest? The refurbished derelict garage site looks much improved, well done.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

As stated above, the mature trees along the main street greatly enhance the streetscape and it's good to see you are planting more. Please avoid pollarding trees unless absolutely necessary. In many cases the results can look unsightly and it can negatively impact on tree health unless very well done. Birch, in particular, doesn't respond well to pollarding. The addition of native trees along some of the road verges is good to see. Some of them are very small and will require careful minding, especially when grass is being cut nearby. Generally only young trees >2m

need to be staked and the stakes should be 1/3 the height of the tree. The aim is to help the roots establish. Some trees are over-staked but they are so small this may be necessary. Some of the grassy verges and larger green areas could be left unmown during the summer months to provide habitat for pollinators. These areas could be clearly demarcated by mowing around them (or on either side in the case of verges) and small signs erected to indicate they are dedicated wildlife habitat. The National Biodiversity Data Centre has lots of advice in this regard for community groups <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/irish-pollinator-initiative/all-ireland-pollinator-plan/local-communities/>. The shrubbery at the entrance to Teegan Court was admired.

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

It's great to read that you are well aware the importance of Charleville Wood. This is an ancient oak woodland of high biodiversity value. Maybe you could include Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) in some of your tree planting projects as there are some magnificent specimen oaks nearby in the woodland. Even if it isn't open to the public, Charleville Wood is a great natural asset to have nearby. The owner may be willing to allow a Tree Week or Heritage Week event in the demesne, if suitable insurance cover could be organised. It's good to hear you are running a pollinator workshop. Such events are a great way to raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity in our everyday lives. You could also run wildlife gardening, tree planting or beekeeping talks. These events are just as important as projects and recognised in the competition as such. Take photos to include with your application.

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

You have done a lot of work on this category but it's not clear what projects you completed this year. Collecting scrap metal and recycling days, use of water butts and promoting a more innovating approach to reduce, reuse etc. is all very commendable. Keep a record on how much scrap metal or other recyclables you are collecting to judge how effective your campaigns are. Do you collect old batteries or facilitate recycling of electrical goods or old clothes? Is there much home composting in Mucklagh? These are areas you could also promote with the help of the Environmental Awareness Officer in the Council. As mentioned last year, there are lots of tips on <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>.

The school are doing great work on their Green Flag. This could be extended to the wider community.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Focussing on litter black spots is a good idea and your efforts seem to be paying off as very little was noted on adjudication day. Organising litter picks on a townland basis is also a good idea because people like to clean up their own area. The repainted eircom exchange boxes look really well. I presume you run a National Spring Clean event. Do you involve the local school children? I see from the photos that the Active Age group are doing their bit. I really like the Mucklagh 'keep our village litter free' signage.

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

The residences along the main street and the housing estates are presented to a very high standard. The hard work of the Tidy Towns and the resident associations is clearly evident. There are many attractive private gardens and well maintained green spaces in the housing estates. Lynally Grove looks particularly well with colourful planting along boundary walls adjacent to the green space with the bench. The tree ties appear to have been removed as recommended last year. Beechmount Park also looks very well with no litter and well-maintained homes. Perhaps more trees could be planted in small groups around the large green area to break it up a little or as suggested last year, create a meadow area to cut down on mowing. Teegan Court has lovely mature gardens and shrubberies.

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

The main road through Mucklagh is developing well with more trees being planted to enhance to streetscape. A tree survey could identify trees that need to be replaced, where gaps could be filled and what species to plant. The planters at each of the entrance signs look very well. Remedial works on the footpaths are excellent. The rose bushes on the roundabout look lovely although they will require a lot of maintenance to keep them healthy. Roses are probably more suited to gardens and future planting in similar locations should probably include more low maintenance trees or shrubs. The bug hotel might be better placed in the school grounds or somewhere it can be examined. The main aim of these hotels is to raise awareness of the importance and variety of bugs. Overall, the impression of Mucklagh when driving through is very positive.

Concluding Remarks:

Mucklagh is developing very well thanks to the efforts of the local community.