

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tullamore** Ref: **727**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **319**
Category: **F** Date(s): **20/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	45	46
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	45	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	18	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	46	48
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	41	41
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	41	41
TOTAL MARK	450	315	319

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you for your application to the 2017 Tidy Towns Competition. Your application is well laid out, if still a bit long, and the map was helpful. Please just note this year's projects on the map to aid the adjudicator. There is so much to highlight and celebrate in Tullamore but try to keep the project descriptions in your application to this year's or ongoing projects. For example, the wildlife panel in the park is lovely but it was completed some time ago. Your three year plan appears to have been improved upon following on from last year's adjudicators comments but there is still room for some improvement. Listing project partners is a good idea but the plan would still benefit from a vision statement that sets out your long-term hopes and goals for Tullamore. You have a large committee and work with many other groups in the town. You also liaise with many other bodies and agencies, which is so important at your level in the competition. 'Team Tullamore' sounds like a great initiative for the development of the town. It's not surprising to read the Tidy Towns Groups is at the heart of it.

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

There are many fine buildings and streetscapes in Tullamore. The new secondary school, Tullamore College, is a most attractive building complemented by mature trees. There are many attractive shop fronts including the Hairy Barber, Crossan's Butchers, The Foxy Bean, Natural Stuff etc. Hanging baskets bring a welcome splash of colour where needed (e.g. Garda station) but they can detract from nice shop fronts or heritage buildings so be selective with their use. A colour scheme is a good idea. The Tullamore Hotel, the Hospital, the Garda Station and Council Buildings are all well presented. There are many heritage buildings and features in the town. A heritage trail- as per your three year plan- would be a great addition. Derelict sites are a difficult issue to deal with. The before and after photos of the boundary treatment on Arden Road highlight what can be done if budgets allow. The graffiti treatment at the Grand Canal harbour is another positive development. The Bridge House Hotel is a fine building, shame about the persistent problem of parking on the pavement at the main door. The Town Park is a wonderful amenity and beautifully presented. The trees planted on O'Carroll Street are a welcome addition to soften the urban environment. The civic space on Main Street has improved.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your success in Entente Florale must have been a huge boost. It's good to hear you are working with a landscape plan for the town. It's great to see you have made progress to increase the number of trees in the town. The major pollarding of trees along the river in the Town Park looks a bit drastic and hopefully the trees will recover well. Do continue to leave long grass adjacent to the river as it protects water quality and provides habitat for wildlife. The rustic fencing and beech hedging looks very well. The Green Flag award for the park is a great achievement. Some of the roundabouts on the bypass could be improved by planting some trees or managing the grassland as a

meadow (for the benefit of pollinators). The 'let it grow and don't mow' policy was evident on some of the road verges but not so much on the roundabouts. The roundabouts managed by the Tidy Towns have some lovely planting of shrubs. There are some colourful planters around the town (including hanging baskets) that bring a splash of colour into the built environment. Trees planted in boxes are not ideal, though, as they will always need watering in dry weather. Flowers planted at the base of trees detract from the beauty of the tree itself. McDonalds is well screened with landscaping and the carpark of Dunnes Stores has some very attractive planting with tall perennials. The floral street structure in O'Connor Square is certainly eye-catching. This is a busy area and I wonder if the wooden planters adjacent to the sculpture are necessary.

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

It's great to hear you are monitoring the presence of Japanese Knotweed in the town. It's good to keep in touch with the Heritage Officer in this regard as it is such a noxious invasive plant. You might be able to extend the unmown areas in the Town Park. There is a lot of open space here and grassland. Unmown patches can look well with a sharp mown edge. Hopefully you can extend this 'let it grow- don't mow' approach to other green spaces in and around the town, in partnership with the local authority e.g. as well as road verges and roundabouts, how about green spaces in housings estates? It's great to keep people informed on new biodiversity initiatives and information but you might find running events is more productive e.g. nature walk or talk along the canal in Heritage Week, Dawn or Dusk Chorus event in the Town Park. The schools are all active in the green schools programme which is a great opportunity for collaboration on wildlife projects. Do any have school gardens, bird tables, bee hotels? Give us some examples of new school wildlife projects next year. Putting up bat and bird boxes is a great way to raise awareness of the wildlife in our towns and villages, but can also provide important nesting sites. Maybe someone could take on the job of monitoring these boxes to see if they are being utilised. This might be a good student project. This category is an area you could make more progress on. You have two fantastic natural habitats on your doorstep- the canal and the river- and a superb Town Park.

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

As stated above, it's great to have all schools in the town involved in the green schools programme. Think about how the green schools ethos could be expanded to the wider community? The Green Flag for the Town Park, Green Building Award for Coláiste Choilm and the uptake of the Green Hospitality Programme by Tullamore Hotel are a sign that the town is 'greening up'.

It's good to see you have a record of interacting with residents associations in relation to composting. How about running a workshop on how to prevent food waste? It will be interesting to see the results of your energy/ water/ composting survey. Once you have the results you can think about how energy and resource use could be improved. How can this message be communicated effectively to other residential areas? Hopefully your meeting with the SEAI regional mentor will prove fruitful.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

For a large town, the level of tidiness and lack of litter on adjudication day was most impressive. It was a sunny day and many people were out and about but very little litter was noted. There was some litter in the Town Park but it was being cleaned up as I walked through. The Main St. area in particular was well presented. Your focus on this area has obviously paid off. The inter-agency approach you have adopted is also a good idea. Cleaning up the waterways is also important and it's good to see that the canoe and subaqua clubs are doing annual clean-ups. It's good to see school children involved with the National Spring Clean as well as your other volunteers. Your anti-dog-fouling poster is great and hopefully effective. Bag dispensers and bins for dog waste will be a great addition. Fly-posting was much less than other towns of a similar size, well done. This can really blight some areas.

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

There are many nice residential areas in Tullamore. Some parts are particularly leafy with mature trees and in others attractive gardens were admired. You are right to acknowledge the hard work of the residents associations and businesses that work hard to enhance Tullamore for the benefit of all. The Tidy Tullamore is a great initiative to provide motivation and reward for all the hard work. Workshops might help those estates or residential areas that don't participate in this competition.

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

There are several approach roads to Tullamore, which provides a bit challenge to the local authority and yourselves. Some of the roundabouts on the bypass don't look great (are they being remodelled?) and hopefully the local authority will work to improve them soon. There are some nice grassy roadside verges with Oxeye daisy, Knapweed and other wildflowers. The roadworks programme is a long-term and on-going project but there are improvements to be seen as listed.

Concluding Remarks:

Tullamore is a fine town with much potential, keep up the good work