

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Coolaney** Ref: **680**
County: **Sligo** Mark: **322**
Category: **C** Date(s): **15/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	43	44
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	34	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	20	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	38
TOTAL MARK	450	314	322

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome to the 2017 Tidy Towns competition. One of the questions the adjudicator intended to ask was whether there was a possibility of a greenway to be created on the dismantled railway – and the question is already answered in the 5-Year-Plan and on your entry form to the effect that you are exploring the matter with CIE. This is a useful document in many ways, particularly in giving a clear focus on what should be accomplished annually. You are now in the final year and have done very well; usually many such projects take longer than expected and this is no harm – take your time and get it right is a motto often advised. You are one of the few committees that work very closely indeed with the schools. It is good to learn that you have a committee member as young as 18. (Incidentally, it would be interesting to know why Coolaney has the greatest population growth in the border region. What are the chief means of employment?) It is interesting to learn of the Sligo Camino: is there a religious or historic context or is it more like a Slí na Sláinte? The account of the National Mountain Bike Centre is impressive. The Sligo Way information board is both interesting and useful. You have very good support from official and private interests. Beware in your visual developments of going too much in the direction of Ye Olde quaintness.

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

Remedial work on the few vacant buildings is first class, especially the clever yet simple exterior of the 'Dutch gable' structure. Would this make a spacious venue for a relocated Café Fia? – perhaps the Community Centre is too well established to make a change really necessary. The black-and-white design of the Centre with its imaginative lettering catches the eye in a very positive way. The green paintwork and rustication of O'Grady's shop opposite has the same pleasing visual impact. The Town Centre Building, new to this adjudicator, terminates the prospect of the main street in a dignified way that is at once arresting and at the same time blends in supremely well: a real success. The subdued colours make a big contribution. As to the streetscape, its perspective is broken only at one significant place, and its central line of trees – two, incidentally, look as if they may need attention before long – as well as the lines of elegant lamp standards along with the sophistication of the layout and the neatness of the houses, is quite breathtaking: but in a remarkably decent way. It is the human scale that ultimately triumphs. The old stone bridges contribute significantly to the built environment. The Sacred Heart church and the nearby school are superbly painted. The older church with its landmark tower at Rathbarran is highly picturesque. Your pictures spurred the visitor to look at buildings not on his original itinerary. The former brick and tile works is a work of art in itself.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The GAA pitch development is very impressive indeed. The playground is colourful and clean. The cemetery is well looked after, with easy access and internal pathways. You are blessed with a resident landscaping expert. Your list

of plants makes interesting reading; not all were seen, but it is clear that they were chosen with scientific as well as a decorative intent. (Sorry the water avens were not seen, this adjudicator is only familiar with the mountain variety.) Paved areas with planting, particularly of roses and lilies, impressed, and roses in tubs were a pleasant surprise. Planting at the bridge is judiciously selected and gives a wonderfully kempt look to this important arrival area. The mountain ash trees – what could be more ‘native’? – will make their mark very quickly. The plans for a footbridge over the Owenbeg will be looked forward to.
WL 35

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

The river walk has many natural aspects, assisted here and there by a little and justifiable human inducement of which the Millennium Park is a fine example. Excellent information boards were seen on the ‘Riparian Way’, the illustrations of birds and plants so engaging they must cause immense interest. The area behind the Community Centre was about to be criticised for untidiness until it was read that it is on the way to becoming a wild flower garden. The present wildflower meadow was favourably noted. Your connection with Nature Learn, the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Inland Fisheries Board is clearly productive. Do you know what species are accommodated in the bug hotel?

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

Thank you for the written account of activities that would be invisible to the judges. It is very good to learn that crafts such as dressmaking, cobbling, even computer repairing, are encouraged, and reuse websites promoted. Your water harvesting system is favourably noted. It is encouraging to read that you are registered with Green Homes. The account of the lengthy and highly technical organisation of the school gardening project along with the help of the children was admired: the resulting garden was not seen because visitors are discouraged from entering school premises. The three year SWRM plan was studied with due respect – everything from composting of grass cuttings to battery recycling, book swap and book rental. The Green Schools transport flag is mentioned, but not others: can you please in future add a list of flags awarded and for what projects. Your mark under this heading is the highest in the county. Congratulations! – and especially to schoolchildren, their teachers and parents. (The county average is 17 in this is a comparatively new though increasingly important subject.) The recycling area is accessible yet unobtrusive.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

In regard to general ‘tidiness’, the building set back from the main street that never matched the streetscape was seen to be under repair. You will be well aware of a neglected corner at the turn for Mountain Park and a derelict house on the road leading up to that neighbourhood. You mention the two derelict cottages that you plan to have removed with the help of the County Council. The absence of wirescape connecting electric poles is a blessing. Do not be too harsh in your ivy cutting unless the buildings/trees are endangered; ivy provides shelter and food for some birds, animals and insects. Well done to your volunteers who regularly pick litter during the summer months – an activity one wishes was not necessary. Is there any way – and have you tried to find out – of litter prevention at source? The example enclosed of the art competition is first rate; you mention the ‘strong message sent to the children and parents’. On seeing your picture of over 50 bags of rubbish collected in the national Spring Clean, the same question is asked about preventing litter at source: who causes this pollution?

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

Coolaney would not be the town it is today were it not for those who designed the main street and built the houses alongside it. (The absence of a then village church is odd.) The residents and business people of this unique street have done well in presenting it with such pride. It is good that you are in contact with all the residents’ associations. On the date of the visit Radharc na hAbhann and Bruach na hAbhann were spic and span, and also the newer homes in this area. Gort na Sí succeeds not only because of its imaginative layout and planting but also on account of the variety of textures and colours; the same may usefully be said of Fort Haven. Sliabh Gamph is a well kept small enclave. Almost all the boundary walls at the pleasant Mountain Park and the inner section of Ard Laighne need freshening up with paint to match the homes. Woodstream benefits greatly from the variation in house styles. Several young trees on estate greens were seen to be in need of replacement; you might talk to residents about kerbside weed in some places – a job that would take about ten minutes a couple of times a year by each householder.
APPRS 38

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

The construction of the footpath from Coolaney to Rockfield was seen in its early stages: this is surely essential for the safety of children and also as a contribution to the Green Flag initiative of ‘walking to school’. Attractive new timber fencing was seen. Numerous traffic calming points were favourably noted. The boardwalk had been successfully repaired and wooden structures repainted or cleaned. Approaches to the town were neatly kept, and road surfaces of an acceptable standard.

Concluding Remarks:

“I heard a reed of Coolaney say...‘the lonely-of-heart are withered away’...”, sang W.B.Yeats : certainly nothing in Coolaney looks as if it is withered away and it is hoped there will be no lonely-of-heart members of your wonderfully active committee and volunteers when they learn that once again they have placed their town at the head of the

county.