

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Aughrim** Ref: **257**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **321**
Category: **C** Date(s): **30/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42	42
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	45	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	31	31
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	319	321

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

You are very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2017. Well done for all the work undertaken by Aughrim Tidy Towns over the last year, as set out in your very clearly written and concise Application Form. It is noted that your Committee has a total of 6 Members who meet at least on a monthly basis with a further 14 who volunteer on an ongoing basis for various works. You have been able to foster links and engagement with different groups and agencies such as County Wicklow Partnership, DSP, Tús, and Wicklow County Council, to further your aims and it is noted you have strong links with Wicklow's Environmental Awareness Officer in relation to combating litter and dog waste issues. You have just introduced group web texting to better communicate with your Community and other communication methods used include local newspaper (Wicklow People), Facebook, Twitter, Public Meetings and Networking Evenings, Tourism Leaflets and other events. It is significant that Aughrim's 30 years involvement with the Tidy Towns Competition has fostered great community spirit and improved awareness of environmental issues and has facilitated the better integration of newcomers into the village. Your support of the local market has encouraged the development of local enterprises such as Artisan Food Producers and this together with your engagement with running local facilities such as the bowling green will enhance the profile of Tidy Towns in Aughrim and foster greater public participation and engagement with your ongoing works programme. The 'Visit Aughrim' Brochure was very useful in finding the various sites of interest around the Town. However, it would be good to have a special Tidy Towns map of the Town, with the specific projects completed this year indicated, together with a numbered legend and completion dates etc. Perhaps this could be considered for next year.

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

The Centre of Aughrim with its striking 1798 Memorial Sculpture and extensive use of granite, characterizes the attractive streetscape and built environment of the Town. The building at Tracy's Barber Shop with its façade covered in Boston ivy was admired - it was noteworthy that smoke was coming from the chimney here at the end of June. The Sacred Heart National School looked well and the large piece of quartz / bronze sculpture of a horse and the mural paintings of birds and flowers on the outbuildings facing the yard were enjoyed. The stone fronted dwellings and their gardens opposite the Church of the Sacred Heart were well presented. The Church grounds were visited and the maintenance here was to very good standard. The Church building is elevated above the road and is an imposing presence in the Town. The use of herbicide to control vegetation behind the stone wall in the field beside the Church was noted. The herbaceous planting scheme, wooden canopy structure and large timber posts along the Main Street and footpath opposite 'The Beauty Spot' premises and beside the Public Library were admired. The window boxes and hanging baskets on the premises at the Londis Food Market - Byrne's Stores Ltd. were also noted positively. Perhaps the sign for the shop may be a little too modern for the traditional/historic character and streetscape of Aughrim? The newly painted National Forester's Centre and cottage garden to the front were admired, as was the window display at Miley Carroll Photography. The presentation of the stone-built

'Pescegrande' Takeaway premises the floral displays outside here were considered very appropriate to the setting. The road surface and markings in the centre of the Town at Market Square in particular, would benefit from some improvement works. The attractive old stonework on the Aughrim Bridge was noted as were the memorials to Anne Devlin and the 1798 Rebellion, inset into the stone parapet walls here. The stunning views from the Bridge over of the mill race and river beyond were enjoyed as were the extensive areas of natural riverside vegetation here. Anne's Laundrette building was greatly admired and the stone feature opposite, but it was wondered why the water was no longer running over the waterfall and along the narrow rill feature? Perhaps Solar power could be used to run this feature, if the cost of electricity is preventing the continuous running of the waterfall? The water feature at the Garda Station could be treated in a similar way. There was some litter in the pond here on the day of adjudication. The Mill Heritage property was briefly visited and it was good to see that some restoration works has commenced here. The re-painting of the Tidy Towns Pavilion at Rednagh Road was noted. We wish you well with your plans to undertake works on the car-park at the Ciarán Shannon walk and note there are delays due to planning and budgetary issues.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The Seán Linehan walk was visited and the natural Riverside vegetation here was enjoyed. The quality of the Sign and information provided here was impressive. The picnic area and amenity open space beside the Tinakilly Bridge was visited. The picnic seats would benefit from repainting. The gentle sound of the water flowing over the series of weirs in the river here was very pleasing and the Red Oak trees in this area were also noteworthy - no doubt these provide great autumn colour later in the year. It is good to note that you are increasing your use of herbaceous perennial planting in Aughrim. This is a good long-term sustainable planting strategy which will provide for year-round impact. The rose planting bed at Arklow Credit Union looked a little tired - the roses here appear to be struggling perhaps they need some extra mulching or feeding? It is noted that you have arranged for the erection of polytunnel to grow your own plant material for floral displays- this is a worthwhile development. The maintenance of landscaped areas in the Town has been generally kept to a high standard. It is noted that you have temporarily planted native broadleaved trees on the bank opposite the playground to facilitate the future replacement of dead trees previously removed in the village.

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

The National Disabled Angling Park was visited and the range of facilities provided here including Bowling Green, Disabled-Accessible Angling Lakes, Children's playground and Thrift Shop run by Aughrim Tidy Towns was very impressive. Apart from the obvious recreational and commercial benefits of these facilities, this is a key site in the Town from the point of view of the protection of important local flora and fauna and it is noted that over half the site is maintained with a view to maximizing natural habitats. Unfortunately, your adjudicator was not lucky enough to spot the Kingfisher nesting in the riverbank near the playground. The recycled plastic benches and seats overlooking Bowling Green were noted positively. You have stocked the lakes with Brown Trout, provided bat boxes in the Pavilion Clocktower and placed heaps of timber and vegetation on the lake island to provide cover for wildlife - all good initiatives under this category. Using an organic method of Algae control (using straw bales) is also an environmentally sound way to deal with this problem.

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

Your Thrift shop was visited and the range and quality of the items on sale on the day of adjudication was impressive. The voluntary effort put in by your Committee and the staff in the running of this great facility is really to be admired. It is good that you are engaging with the Greening Communities Programme in Conjunction with An Taisce and Wicklow County Council and that staff from the Thrift Shop have attended a clothes upcycling workshop run by Wicklow County Council. You have been able to fund specific projects and planting schemes throughout the village from the income generated from the popular use of the Clothes Recycling bank and plans are even afoot to purchase a new mower from the proceeds. The waste metal project is also a great idea to raise funds and reduce/reuse waste for local residents and we wish you well with this. Your aim to switch to 'Aspen' fuels is laudable and we were wondering whether conversion to zero emission electric powered equipment/vehicles might also be considered?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are making good use of the Road Sweeper machine to keep Aughrim clean and tidy - the Sweeper was seen being put into in action on the day of the visit. The daily litter picks are also important to keep on top of this ongoing problem. An inspection of the Town Centre confirmed that the litter situation in Aughrim is well under control, despite the heavy through traffic. It is good that following your request, that the Litter Warden gave a talk to all the children of the National School on the importance of disposing of litter and dog waste properly. The use of Biodegradable Coffee cups by local businesses would be a good idea, although perhaps providing a discount to customers who use their own re-fillable containers might be a more sustainable alternative proposal?

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

Saint Martin's Drive was visited and the quality and standard of the maintenance of this estate impressed, including the open space maintenance and planting. The stone cottages and front gardens at Arden Row were admired. Of particular note was Cúirt an Gleanna Estate, located close to the centre of the Town, which was well presented and really complements the traditional streetscape of Aughrim. Croghan View estate was visited and the presentation of the estate and open spaces in particular, would benefit from more intensive maintenance work as would Chapel Lane estate. Chapel Lane Heights was admired for the wildflowers flourishing on the sloping bank facing the houses. Our Lady's Drive had a good standard of presentation although the grass on the green area to the right of

the entrance was a little long and required cutting. Consider screening the large and unsightly ESB kiosk located on the open space with hedge planting – this has worked well in other areas. The Holiday Village, a new participant in the Estate Awards, was visited and the quality of this housing development, its setting and the Sylvan character of the open spaces was impressive. The grove of birch trees on both sides of the entrance to the estate were particularly noteworthy. Also noteworthy was Aughrim Hall estate, where the presentation of the estate and the standard of maintenance of open spaces etc. was excellent - perhaps some climbers or hedging could be planted on the walls facing out on the open spaces here.

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

The management and maintenance of grass margins and boundaries along the approach roads to Aughrim is carried out to a good standard with due regard to the need to encourage wildlife. The vertical standing stones at the junction of St Martin's Drive and the R747 Woodenbridge/Arklow road were admired. However, it was felt that there were too many temporary commercial signs at this prominent junction, which detracted from the presentation of the approach to the Town. Road surfaces on the approaches to the town were generally found to be good but some renewal of road markings is needed in places. The Joule Park GAA Grounds were noted and the climbing Hydrangea along on the walls and the Lime trees growing on the margin, are establishing very well. The frontage along the GAA Grounds enhances the entrance to the Town. As outlined previously, some attention should be given to improving the quality of the road surfaces and markings in the centre of the Town.

Concluding Remarks:

Aughrim continues to be a very well cared for and attractive Town and it is heartening to note that Aughrim Tidy Towns is still a very strong force for the further development and improvement of the social and commercial life of the Town. We hope you find our comments helpful and we wish you well with all your efforts for the year ahead.