

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Grange Con** Ref: **825**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **299**
Category: **A** Date(s): **05/07/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	43	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	28	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28	29
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	37
TOTAL MARK	450	290	299

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

You are very welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2017. Well done to Grange Con Tidy Towns Committee for participating in this year's Tidy Towns Competition and for all the hard work carried out this year. Many thanks also for the excellently presented Entry Form and Submission- it really was a pleasure read, very clear, concise and including some great photographs showing the works undertaken. It was also a pleasure to use the well prepared laminated Village Map enclosed with your application, showing a numbered Key legend and Pure Mile Zones, all of which assisted greatly in the Adjudication of Grange Con this year. It is noted that Grange Con first entered the Tidy Towns Competition in 1998 and it is great to see the Committee is still very active in the Village with 12 full members and a further 6 Volunteers involved on an ongoing basis on Tuesday evenings and the Committee itself meeting at least once monthly. Perhaps it would be good to encourage other bodies to set up locally to support and work with you- would there be any scope locally to establish a Men's Shed – they can be very useful in repairing old machines, upcycling materials, making bird and bat boxes and bug hotels etc. using left over timber. Thanks are due to Wicklow County Council, Stratford/Grange Con Development Committee, SuperValu, An Taisce, the owners of the Village Hall and Moore's Pub, and local residents and farmers, all of whom greatly supported Grange Con Tidy Town's operations this year. You have taken on board the comments of the Adjudicator last year and have set up a Facebook page which will allow you to engage more fully with the Community by providing a diary of events, local Tidy Towns news items, photos etc. However, you also utilise Local Newspapers, Parish Newsletter, and noticeboards to communicate with stakeholders/local residents. That Grange Con was winner of the National Tree Project Award sponsored by the Tree Council of Ireland in 2016 is a terrific achievement and a testament to the importance given to tree planting and protection within the village, as part of your Tidy Towns Plan. Youth involvement in Tidy Towns is very important and it is pleasing to note that you have a youth representative on your committee and you liaise closely with the Principal of the Village School on the completion of Green Flag Projects such as biodiversity walks etc.

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

The overall presentation of the residential properties and commercial premises in the village was to a very high standard. Of particular note were the original granite door surrounds and window sills on some of the residential buildings. The Marian Shrine/ Grotto was noted for the restoration works undertaken including the new granite kerbing and paving which complements the original granite wall and plinth of the shrine. The roses were in full bloom here on the day of adjudication and there was a lovely sweet scent in the air. The Bell cottage and the Clock was noted and was showing the right time - well done on this repair job. Also admired was the new attractive sign in cast-iron denoting Bell Cottage. The grounds of the Church were visited and we noted of the good standard of maintenance here, pleasing floral displays and the ornate Church Bell Tower. It was pleasing to spot some young trout fish swimming in the little stream (River Greese) running beside the Church. The row of houses across the

road from the church add character to the village and were admired as were the window-boxes and plant displays here. Perhaps the petrol pump could be restored. Kavanagh's Bar and Casa Tapas Bar and Grill were very attractively presented adding to the quality of the streetscape. It will be good to push for the undergrounding of overhead cables and the removal of timber poles which currently detract from the village and along the Stratford Road. The Community Field was visited and the car park setback area and realigned stonewalling was noted together with the footpath and recent repair works to the wall as well as a new litter bin. The new bin at the entrance to Mallen's Wood Estate was also noted. The presentation of Mallen's Wood junction was to a very high standard and we admired the clipped box hedging surrounding the young Horse Chestnut tree. The Grange Con Heritage/Information sign was clean and very informative and provided good information on the features and history of the area. The Grange Con boxing club building the colourful railings outside caught the eye. Grange Con National School was visited and we noted the very good standard of presentation of the grounds and school frontage. It is heartening to note that the school is to be awarded its Fifth Green Flag in relation to 'Biodiversity'.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

It is noted that you have no new work under this category this year but continue to carry out maintenance of the playground area at the corner of the Community Field and Mallen's Wood Meadow area. The playground was getting good use on the morning of the visit -this is a great facility to have so close to the village. It is good that you have scaled back your annual bedding planting in favour of bulbs and herbaceous perennial schemes. The open field between Kavanagh's Pub and the Railway Stables property was noted and it is hoped that the boundary issues here can be resolved shortly.

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

Quite a bit of work has been carried out at the local Primary School under this category and we note that the 5th Green Flag for 'Biodiversity' has been awarded to the school - this is a great achievement. A nesting box supplied by Tidy Towns has been erected by the schoolchildren in group of the birch trees and further boxes have been erected by Grange Con Tidy Towns at the entrance to Mallen's Wood. The pupils at the school have also prepared fat balls to feed the birds over Winter and have erected Bug Houses and a Willow Structure on the school grounds. It was interesting to note the survey work carried out by the students under instruction on the River Greese to examine the insect and animal life present in the stream and this and other Wildlife hotspots were examined by Tidy Towns Members.

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

It is noted that you have no new work to report under this category this year but you do actively encourage Grange Con residents to use the nearby Waste Recycling facility at Ramphere. It is understood that with limited resources it can sometimes be difficult for villages to make progress under this category. However, it is possible to encourage greater waste minimisation by organizing awareness raising events to do with reuse, repair and refurbishment. This category also promotes resource efficiency with regard to Transport, Water and Energy. Your group might therefore, consider further initiatives under this category for future years such as promoting the use of water butts to harvest rainwater for watering of gardens and flower beds, car-pooling and walk to school initiatives, improved cycle facilities, encouraging the development of small solar farms on appropriate sites, the use of solar panels on roofs, installing heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses etc. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland website has good information in relation to the development of Better Energy Communities. The Green Home Programme may also be of interest to your Group (www.greenhome.ie). Grant funding may also be available to provide energy efficiency upgrades for community and commercial facilities. You could also speak to the Environmental Officer at the Council on possibly participating in the European Week for Waste Reduction which takes place in November each year. Visit www.ewwr.eu for more information. www.stopfoodwaste.ie is a website that you may also find helpful.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The Central core of the village of Grange Con was generally found to be very neat and tidy on the day of adjudication and there was a complete absence of litter in the area - well done to your Fás litter patrol team and local residents for their great work in this regard. We note you have applied the PURE Mile Project in 2017 in relation to Castle Hill, Grange Con Hill, Barronstown Road, Bessina and Knockarrig Hill. This is a good development and will assist you in keeping the approach roads to Grange Con neat and tidy and free from dumping into the future. We thank you for taking part in the National Spring Clean each year- it is important to organize a major clean up in an area to deal with any items discarded/ hidden over the winter months. A significant issue being noticed around the country is the spraying of herbicides along hedgerows and ditches on country roads in front of properties for no apparent reason? – this is very unsightly and has a negative impact on wildlife. This is not a problem in the Grange Con area but it does highlight the need to minimise, where possible, the use of herbicides in our landscape maintenance operations.

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

Mallen's Wood estate was maintained to a very good standard and we particularly admired the grove of native trees on the way into the estate, where an area of the grass was left uncut. This is a very good approach to the management of open space as it encourages wildlife and reduces maintenance costs. It was wondered what was the status of the large plot of land opposite the houses (behind the hedge) in Mallen's Wood and whether it could be used as Parkland and possibly to provide a link to a future Greenway along the disused railway line? The parking of vehicles and trailers on the Communal open space here should be discouraged.

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

The attractive stone walls coupled with nicely clipped hedges on the approaches to the village really do provide a pleasant experience for visitors to Grange Con. The approach to the village along the Stratford Road was well maintained and very clean and tidy. The approach to the village along Dunlavin road was also very clean and tidy and excellently maintained. It is noted that you have decided to cut a strip along the edge of the road in places and leaving long grass behind along the boundary hedgerow – this is a very good and sustainable management regime. The approach to Grange Con along the Baltinglass Road was also admired. The approach to Grange Con along on the Baronstown Road where the road is flanked on both sides by attractive stonewalls particularly impressed. The sign to prevent dumping in this area as part of your PURE Mile contribution was noted. Surfaces and markings on approach roads are generally good but the condition of roads in the village core is mixed and some areas would benefit from re-surfacing and re-marking in the future.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a great pleasure to visit Grange Con village for the first time - it is a real gem and has significant potential to progress to the upper echelons of the Tidy Towns competition. The traditional streetscape and character in the village remains intact and you clearly have an Organisation and Community working hard towards ensuring that Grange Con is presented and managed to the highest possible standard. Some further attention could be given to the categories where your scoring could be significantly improved. We hope you find the comments in the report helpful and wish you well with your future endeavours.