

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **326**
Category: **C** Date(s): **28/06/2017**
05/08/2017

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42	42
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	19	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
TOTAL MARK	450	322	326

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Fáilte roimh Leighlin An Droichid chuig Comórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu don bhliain 2017. It was a first occasion for this adjudicator to visit and appraise your beautiful village and the weather was obliging with blue skies and sunshine. Your reputation as a high scorer preceded the visit and proved a delight to witness first hand your many projects and achievements. Indeed your achievements are well illustrated in the Parish Centre as a reminder for generations to come. Your submission was substantial and runs to 70 pages, coupled with a separate 15 page response document dealing with the adjudication of 2016. We feel such a volume of information is inordinate in size and much of the content unnecessary for the task on hand. We suggest a much smaller submission for 2018. The two maps are detailed and informative and were of great assistance on adjudication day. Your submission on Community Involvement and Planning stretched to six pages dealing with new and ongoing technology and neglected 'work on the ground'. We would like to know more about your motivation of the community and your close association with other groups. We acknowledge the value of all the photographs from your year's activities and these give us a good understanding of your work within the village.

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

We really liked the footpaths on Main Street, especially the limestone kerbing. Hopefully, the passing of time will take the 'new' look off this work and let it blend in with the rich heritage surrounds. We admired much the attractive public lighting and in particular the lamps on the bridge. We feel the Celtic Tiger could have been kinder to you by undergrounding the overhead service cables throughout the village, but perhaps an other time. You have some attractive shop fronts and the small traditional shop fronts on main street are attractive. The work at Harrington's Bookmakers is commendable but the building needs improvement, but do avoid loud signage here as we see in our travels elsewhere. The work on the stone wall in High Street is commendable but remember ivy has its place and at times can be excessively obtrusive. The three shops on Poe's Hill are attractive and occupied and add to the attractiveness to the adjacent open space, so well done, although we would have settled for smaller signage at Cavanani's. The upgrading of the façade of the derelict house at Poes Hill is typical of admirable tidy towns work and we commend you on this as it is likely that the work would not be done but for the efforts of your committee. The unfinished houses at Inis Gardens are a puzzle as they are new and with the current economic climate one would expect occupancy. Your work here is praiseworthy and we hope will be acknowledged by the owner. We liked the improvements to the building at Ballyknockan. Our first negative note deals with the single storey house on the LHS of the Carlow approach. We now appreciate that this house is under restoration and this is good news for 2018. It has potential to be a winner. Let's hope the cures will prevail when restored!. We like the traditional features of St. Lazerian's Church and the inside is most attractive with its strong touch of gothic arches. The work here on the Tapestry of The Baptism of Christ is stunning. That you would link the Barrow with the Jordan and include the Sliabh Bloom in the surrounds is really unique, and mholadh do gach éinne a bhí baineach leis. Because of the

volume of text in this section we are including much of the category under landscaping.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You have worked hard in this category and the plethora of well kept open spaces is commendable. The comments on the use of Irish in last year's adjudication was by way of encouragement. All centres have a part to play in promoting the use of Irish and we find good support for bilingualism generally. A good example of effective bilingualism can be seen throughout the village on the excellent Heritage Signs erected by the OPW. These are really informative, albeit difficult to read the text at the Vivaldi garden without 'trespassing' over the box hedge. We understand these signs are to be refurbished. Does this mean some of the text will be updated or does it mean simply an upgrading of the faded photographs? The garden is a highlight and projects a most inviting image for the village. Visitors (perhaps locals) were enjoying the picnic seating on adjudication day and the whole area here is strengthened by the adjacent majestic river. It was good you chose Nurse Keohe from Leighlinbridge, the first civilian casualty of the 1916 Rising, to feature on your stone plaque. Indeed you have many plaques throughout the village and they provide most interesting information for locals and visitors alike. Important to keep those to a high standard in particular to ensure the inscriptions are clear and legible. Sadly, from an adjudicator's point of view we do not get an opportunity to view your wonderful spring planting or to view your snowdrops, bluebells or daffodils but we appreciate your photographs of work in hand during this early spring. Your mention of Local Agenda 21 caught my eye in your submission as we hear little about this subject which was one of our best performances. No tears I'm sure when you removed the leylandi trees from the river bank area and now you plan a new development on education, Leader funding permitting. This will be an opportunity to use Irish in a positive way by the uses of trilingual signage of Irish, English and Latin for plants and wild life etc.

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

One must concur with last year's adjudicator's comments on the importance, and indeed challenge of generating awareness. This category has taken some time for centres to fully comprehend and we are still in a learning process as we extend our activities and emphasis to pollination. The refurbishment of your wildlife information board was mentioned last year also, and it is good to learn of its completion. Your visuals submitted in your submission indicate a great deal of activity in this category and we are really pleased with your future plans on biodiversity. By way of information your Tidy Towns colleagues in Rath Chairn, Co. Meath, commissioned a study in cooperation with Meath Co. Council to produce a biodiversity action plan for their area. The author is Deborah D'Arcy, so it might be worth while contacting the Meath Co. Council re same. Your activity with nature walks and talks is commendable and will prove beneficial no doubt. You are endowed with a wonderful natural landscape and a majestic river offering great opportunity for raising your marks in this category, so make use of such an advantage. The river walk is superb and the envy of many villages and towns throughout no doubt. We commend your school and all concerned on such an achievement in receiving so many green flags. However, we are puzzled that such achievements do not translate to the school garden, which was a disappointment in presentation. Could this be improved for 2018? This comment is not to omit the visits of the school children to the community garden, but we would like to see the immediate efforts of the children at their own garden.

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

Our visit to the community garden was a delight and we can see at a glance how hard you work in this category. You are fortunate to have such a facility, complete with poly tunnel and storage building for all the workers in this project. This is a true community endeavour and surely gives great joy and pleasure to all participants. Your talk on ECO PLEDGE seems to have fired your audience and we are glad of the close association of your group with Carlow Co. Co. We can see also that this category offers great cooperation from community groups like Men's Shed and the work carried out in the Day Care Centre. Please keep Water, Energy and Transport foremost in your mind in this category. We are aware of your many water conversation butts and would hope every house would cooperate with this promotion. Of course winter period provides ideal opportunities for the promotion of this category through workshops and lectures in preparation for field trips at a later stage. We also witnessed first hand the watering of your many water containers, hanging baskets etc and were not surprised that the Barrow obliges with an abundance of water for same.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We commend you on your performance in this section and found the village virtually litter free. We were actually pleased with the absence of litter bins in many areas as the message is obviously getting through: bring your litter home. Your bring bank has changed its location and was well presented on adjudication day. No evidence of graffiti, chewing gum or obvious vandalism, well done. You do have a few untidy spots throughout the village and on the approach roads. The unused farm yard on the Carlow road entrance needs a clean up and C. Murphy's yard would benefit from a tidy up. The building material fronting the house opposite the Parish Centre is unfortunate on this site. It has potential to be landscaped to a high standard and would augment the house appearance and value no doubt. There are a few narrow untidy side and back entrances to houses visible from the Tullow entrance. The house down from the 1798 plaque would benefit from fresh painting. We noticed the improvement on the small post box beside the John Tyndal plaque. There is sign for Garrison House Accommodation sign which looks obsolete, should be removed. The house and wall opposite Dorans shop is in need of painting, it is quite weather stained, but in fairness it is also subject to a great deal of passing traffic.

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

We did not find any chapter under Residential Streets and Housing Areas in your submission. However, all housing estates were visited and are of very good quality and presentation. We admired Inis Gardens where collective effort was obvious and the entrance identity here is attractive. We liked the housing scheme at Orchard Lane for independent living and applaud the concept and the provision of such accommodation. Well done in particular to the wonderful restoration of the mill which now houses many people in the apartments within. This was surely a courageous project and fits in well to the heritage abundance of the village, and at the same time protects a heritage building of such quality. The quality of individual housing is very good and some excel with bright gardens. We loved the red and white cottage on the Carlow entrance which was undergoing painting on the day of adjudication. Our first stop was at Ballyknockan Church where access seems to be via a private entrance where there is an excellent garden with a great variety of vegetables and flowers. The house has qualities seldom seen. Shaws house would benefit from fresh painting. We visited Garrison Holiday homes which are really attractive, well planned with good layout; however a little colour would enhance further.

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

You have no fewer than seven entrance points, all demanding in presentation and maintenance. We choose the Carlow entrance because it was the first to be signposted from the Kilkenny road to the village. What a delightful approach this is, with the imposing Fáilte sign neatly trimmed and obvious to all. The SuperValu information sign of achievements sets the scene for a village with credentials. A little further on the real rural scene unfolds, with horses grazing in a delightful countryside. The road itself, flanked with well kept hedges and margins, mature trees and good road structure is of high quality. Other approaches were comparable in standard, apart from the approach from the small water tower which is overgrown and obviously not getting the same attention as the other entry points. Our last stop of the day was so rewarding. We visited the Arboretum Garden Centre which is an experience comparable to any garden centre from far and near. The blown up photograph stretching the full width of the building as you exit the centre is startling and worth 10,000 words to the promotion of Leighlinbridge. It is a view of the tower house, bridge, river and village and embraces at a glance the beauty of the village. Maith sibh.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a great delight to visit Leighlinbridge for the first time and witness such a great performance. Your 'reply' document to the two adjudicators of 2016 surprised this adjudicator. You are at a very high level in a competitive competition and your achievements down the years are well acknowledged. We urge you not be too sensitive in dealing with the results. Bear in mind that adjudicators and activists are all on the same side, all committed to enhancing the environment and improving the quality of life. We wish you continued success in the competition. Adh mór.

Second Round Adjudication:

Leighlinbridge looked as wonderful on the evening of second adjudication as it did on the first visit, thank you for yet another fine presentation. Your second adjudicator feels that two maps are unnecessary and one featuring both major landmarks and location of projects colour coded and linked numerically to details in the entry form would have facilitated the adjudication process better; the village was easy to negotiate and thank you for the numerous options for viewing videos of Leighlinbridge including the Virtual Reality viewer, a 'first' for this adjudicator. Whilst the majority of buildings and their curtilage areas looked well many were weather stained to a degree particularly in respect of roadside boundary walls. The recycling point located in the church car park was extremely tidy.

Landscaping appears to be Leighlinbridge's 'forte' with its many parks, green open spaces and permanent planting not to mention numerous colourful flower displays in beds and containers.

Long stretches of hedgerow look neatly maintained, we note from your entry form that these have not been cut outside of the time periods allowed to protect wildlife habitats. Is there a colony of swifts in the area? Many were spotted on second adjudication.

It was good to note the wire-scape free aspect of the village centre, hopefully the ducting of overhead service cables will continue to incorporate the area at the bridge and along Seskin Road. Trees /shrubs could be planted at a roadside boundary wall for greater enclosure to a site with sheds / outhouses on Milford Street (the road up from the entrance to the Arboretum Garden Centre)

Roadside boundary walls to some dwellings along Seskin Road (and elsewhere) were in need of attention; many gardens on this road were admired. Gardens with red rose displays to dwellings with white facades were particularly eye catching for their beauty.

Approach roads and their entrances to Leighlinbridge were all of a good standard of presentation as were footpaths and street furniture; car parking is well organised; spaces within the church car park will need to be refreshed soon by painting. Thank you again for another fine presentation.