

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Inistioge** Ref: **394**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **325**
Category: **B** Date(s): **23/06/2017**
03/08/2017

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	43	43
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	48	48
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	37	40
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	19	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
TOTAL MARK	450	318	325

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Inistioge is welcome back to the Supervalu Tidy Towns competition 2017 – you are long-standing participants in this important competition. We were delighted to have a good excuse to visit your picturesque village. We must compliment the person who drew the map. Not only was it beautifully artistic to look at but it clearly highlighted your recent work, approach roads and key landmarks. The best we've seen on this round of adjudication, thank you. We are delighted to read that Inistioge has been chosen as one of only two tourism hubs in the new Kilkenny Co Co Tourism Strategy (2017 – 2022). Thank you for clearly laid-out entry including helpful summary letter and photos – you have clearly taken the time to concentrate on the submission.

You might save specific project details for the relevant category; otherwise it makes the form a little unwieldy. Your committee is well organised and has as strong sustainability ethos. You appear to have good community involvement, support of local businesses and links with the local school. Liaising with neighbouring Tidy Towns groups is a worthwhile idea, in order to share ideas and learn from one another. Your efforts to encourage new residents to come on board are commended as are your responses to actions recommended by previous adjudicator recommendation.

You work closely with the many community groups in Inistioge as well as outside agencies such as Kilkenny Co Co, Kilkenny Leader Partnership and the Public Participation Network. You have a wide range of communications channels to get your message across - from local newspapers to Facebook and the all-important word-of-mouth. Thank you for submitting a copy of your new Tidy Towns Development and Action Plan (2017 – 2019). This should ensure your continued success in the coming years. Residents of Inistioge are obviously proud of where they live. Keep up the good work.

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

We are delighted to read that the village is designated a National Monument and therefore are preservation laws in relation to the preservation of your unique built heritage. You show great cognisance of the need to do this in the appropriate manner and to highlight it to others. We admired by some lovely homes and businesses where original details and sash windows have been preserved. The lovely church is nestled between two streets and we were fascinated by the building design to the rear. The hard landscaping here is softened by attractive flower planters. We enjoyed a wander into the historic St. Mary's Church. Further uphill, St. Colmcille's Brass Band Preservation Building is another building of note – can the murals be freshened up soon? The large 'Erdinger' banner on one of the bar/restaurants detracts a little from the visual appearance. Signage at the café was poor but perhaps there is work in progress here? It was difficult to make out the names of both these establishments. Over at the Square, the charming post office and adjacent building were admired. Both O' Donnell's and O' Keefe's looked well – it was nice to see visitors enjoying the outdoor seating area. Your annual participation in Heritage Week is noted – this includes

a tour of the village's built heritage. Public toilets were in good order – these have recently been refurbished.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You are striking a very good balance in this category and most new planting is pollinator-friendly. St. Colmcille's was a wonderful surprise on our walk about – this sizeable hillside area is beautifully maintained while at the same time offering encouragement for bees and other wildlife. The village square is another gem and a lovely place to sit and observe the goings-on – we loved the clean lines and simple landscaping here to reflect the elegance of the surroundings. The majestic copper beech tree was admired. The red geraniums at the old Methodist Church provide good contrast against the white background. The Millennium Garden is nicely maintained – we note that you have increased perennial planting here. Well done for taking your adjudicator's recommendations on board with regard to the sowing of lower maintenance wild flowers and grasses at the graveyard.

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

You have really embraced this category and rightly so given your unique location. You are blessed with the range of habitats that surround your village – from the woodland and native hedgerows to the Nore river. The Woodstock loop walk is a wonderful amenity that is well signposted. Thank you for the photos of bluebells in bloom – stunning! Efforts to restore the Grove site and manage the invasive rhododendron are lauded. You work closely with Trails Kilkenny to ensure walking is promoted in the area. We note that you are situated on the South Leinster Way. The Community Garden is another wonderful creation – you have continued with additional projects here. We found it hard to believe it's only in its second year! Well done to all involved. Are you considering putting a sign here? We're not sure if it's publicly accessible for visitors or not? Here you have your poly tunnel, vegetable growing and rainwater harvesting. The new limestone picnic tables at the Point Rd are noted. The River Park (SAC) is beautifully maintained. The benches and tables were in process of getting a makeover. You have been increasing your perennial planting here also. Your pilot wildflower area on the Thomastown Road is looking good. You have been proactive in implementing various actions recommended in the National Pollinator Plan, in order to protect our bees and other wildlife. Your guided walks are a good way of getting the residents interested in what's around them. This is the first we've heard of a Tidy Towns group sponsoring the local Heritage in School scheme. The children are well informed on local biodiversity including the red squirrel. You continue your fight against invasive species Himalayan Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. Keep us updated please. Thank you for submitting your Biodiversity Workshop Report by Ecologist Janice Fuller (Aug 2016). Keep up this excellent progress.

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

The whole ethos of your Tidy Towns programme appears to be based on minimum environmental impact in whatever you do. You are getting good advice and implementing simple yet effective measures to reduce waste and use of resources locally. You have the potential to score highly in this category. Working towards a 'Green Designation' for the village is an interesting concept and we wish you well with it. Cois Abhann Centre already has a number of resource-saving technologies in situ. The Community Garden ticks many boxes also – growing locally, chemical-free, peat-free, rainwater harvesting, cutting down on packaging, using your own compost...the list goes on. Upcycling is a good way of reusing materials such as timber – you have made bird boxes and window boxes. Your Food Waste survey highlighted ways in which residents could cut down on waste and save money at the same time? Was there a workshop held around this survey project? Some interesting items were made at your upcycling workshop. Your various recycling initiatives are well-established.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village itself was litter-free on the day of our visit. Your ongoing litter picks and awareness raising are paying off. How do your rotas work? We note your challenges on approach roads. Illegal dumping in the woodland area is another concern; however you liaise with KCC and Coillte on same. Do you segregate collected litter for recycling where possible? Don't forget to tell us about your litter awareness activities as there are marks going for same. Inistioge presents quite a tidy appearance. We're not sure why there was a plastic bag covering one of the bins at Daybreak. Could the door on the left hand side of the building be painted white to blend in with the grey? Otherwise it looks well. We acknowledge that there is a new proprietor here. Could the nearby pallets be moved to a less visible location as they give a cluttered impression? Try to minimise items outside shops. The 'Footlights' banner is grubby and should be removed, along with the dead flower pots? We found the planters on the narrow footpath to be quite hazardous as they blocked access. Can they be moved to a more suitable location?

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

Residences along the main streets and approach roads were, on the whole, well maintained. We admired some lovely gardens with interesting planting for year round colour and interest. Charming homes on the lovely Hatchery Lane were admired, particularly the green spaces in front. We are delighted to read about the renovation here for a formerly derelict house. We observed lovely laneways of charming cottages. You show good engagement with all your residents, including estates. The Orchard and Cois Abhann were neatly presented with good landscaping. We loved the linear planting at the entrance to the last estate on the left (name?) Please ask residents to refrain from dumping grass cuttings on the roadside as its gives an untidy impression. Home or community compost sites should be used. Your 'Inistioge in Bloom' competition is a great way of encouraging residents to play their part. Nothing beats a bit of friendly rivalry either! We gladly note that you have introduced and added category here with regard to vegetable gardens and pollinator-friendly gardening. We love the idea of the 'Shared Garden' – community spirit at its best! Well done to all involved.

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

Approach Roads are welcoming - maintained to a good standard but not over-manicured, in keeping with your rural setting and your policy to encourage your local biodiversity. We approached from the Graignamanagh Rd and enjoyed the majestic views down over the village, particularly of the narrow stone bridge and riverside areas. Road signage was in good order. You have started to take a pollinator-friendly approach to planting on your approach roads and it is having good visual impact. Inistioge has some lovely back lanes that add to the overall charm of the village. We note your ongoing liaison with KCC Area Engineer with regard to street upgrading and provision of road markings. Do keep us updated on this and the water supply upgrade project.

Concluding Remarks:

You are taking the right approach in your drive to develop a sustainable community. We are very impressed with the quality of initiatives and the community spirit to implement them. Excellent submission. Keep up the good work.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure to visit your community as an adjudicator in SuperValu 2017 TidyTowns competition and explore your village and learn a little about it. We see that you, justly, proudly display the many medals which you have won for the whole community to see. We loved your very colourful map which lead us seamlessly through your very picturesque village with buildings and other items of interest highlighted and projects undertaken numbered. It was a beautiful map and please pass on our compliments to the talented artist.

What a stunning view of your village as we entered from the west. The variety of buildings add greatly to architectural character of your beautiful village. You are certainly an historic village and you embrace this title with dignity. We particularly loved the tooled granite ashlar bridge over the wide River Nore. This bridge with its ten arches is magnificent and being able to view it from various locations is excellent. We also admired the almshouse and the old schoolhouse both of which have been converted and are now in use for different purposes. What magnificent churches you have – the RC St. Colmille's church and the Cof I St. Mary's church. We admired the restoration work that is being undertaken within the village and compliment the stone mason on his work. It is good to see that he is using lime mortar as cement mortar is unsuitable in such restoration projects. You have a number of other buildings which deserve to be mentioned but it would be unfair to pick out one or two – just to say that they were very well presented many having been freshly painted this year.

The village square is the focal point of the village and was beautiful. It is formally landscaped which suits its location and which allows the monument and fountain to be admired. Having the River Nore flow beside the heart of the village is a wonderful bonus and you capitalise on this. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting the riverside park and sat for a while listening to the river and enjoying the bird song. You have a great variety of trees planted here which add greatly to one's enjoyment of this facility. It was meticulously maintained and we greatly admired the formal landscaped area in front of the terraced houses. We visited Woodstock Gardens but unfortunately could not enjoy them completely – this is for another visit when we can stay a little longer. You have done great work in your planting schedule and your list of the pollinator-friendly plants which you added this year is impressive. When we visited we witnessed a great number of bees and butterflies so your planting programme works.

We were happy to read that you had a good turnout for the guided walks in Woodstock during Heritage Week. This is a time when families engage with our natural and built heritage and our traditions and customs. You live in an area which is encircled by a variety of natural habitats which is wonderful – the river, the woodlands and the great farmland area, with its variety of fields enclosed by native hedgerows. There are also some beautiful stone walls in and around the town and which are a haven for insect life. Involving school children in the various projects you outlined is admirable and these will stimulate an awareness of their environment. Participating in the Dawn Chorus has now become a wonderful way to gel the community and we see that you had a great turn out in 2017 for this event.

What a great initiative of your Community Garden Development which helps to promote gardening skills among the community while also being practical by providing planting for display in the village in addition to vegetables. We were delighted to read that you use a mulcher when grass cutting as collecting grass is such a waste when it should be left to provide nutrients to the soil.

We question if the new lighting installed on the bridge are LED lights? You might let us know this in next year's application. Is Inistioge a member of the SEAI Sustainable Energy Communities? You might investigate this and perhaps gain ideas for other projects from other communities for this important category. We also loved reading about your Upskilling Workshop.

We are happy to record that the village was free from litter on our visit and looked extremely neat and tidy. While some weeds were noticed there weren't too many and so your work in keeping the area litter and weed free is working. We were happy to see that you end your litter pick-up events with a cuppa as we all need a reward when work is done! This also helps to develop a communal spirit which this competition fosters. We noticed, with admiration, that signage is at a minimum on most of the commercial buildings in the village which allows their architectural beauty to be seen rather than be hidden behind a clutter of unsuitable signs.

There is a mix of single and two storey houses in and around your village with many of them being part of a farm complex with attached outbuildings, sheds and farmyards. On the whole, they were very well maintained, some having been freshly painted with complimentary colours for their windows and doors. We loved that many retain

their up and down sash windows which give them great character. We see that your Inistioge in Bloom competition is a success and love the idea that residents are encouraged to take part.

We loved visiting the village and the roads in and around the village have good surfaces and clear signage. We see that you are awaiting the provision of road markings and we agree these are necessary in some areas to ease flow and parking arrangements. We were happy to see wildflowers and grass growing in the hedgerows showing that they hadn't been trimmed for a while to allow for nesting birds the law is good. Some of your pollinator-friendly flowers were in full bloom when we visited and looked beautiful. We also admired the display of farmyard machinery reminding the visitor that this is a rural community and proud of its origins.

Inistioge is a very special place and it was extremely enjoyable visiting your village and seeing the various projects which you undertook this year. Supplying information clearly and legibly simplifies the process of the adjudication and your well completed application form accompanied by your excellent map, photos, etc. made it a pleasure to adjudicate your village. You have a wonderful vibrant community and we look forward to a return visit in the years ahead to see its progress. Thank you for entering the Supervalu 2017 Tidy Towns competition. We agree with the marks awarded by the previous adjudicator.