

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardee** Ref: **488**
County: **Louth** Mark: **314**
Category: **E** Date(s): **12/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	54	54
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	38	39
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36	36
TOTAL MARK	450	307	314

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you Ardee for your 43rd entry into the national Tidy Towns competition. You have a good sized committee for a large town and work closely with key bodies especially the Ardee Traders Association and Louth County Council. This has allowed you to advance joint initiatives very successfully. You commend the work of SOLAS with the community employment scheme it would be impossible to implement your work programme. Great links and support are also gained from TUS, Resident Associations and local professionals such as botanist Julie Roe who compiled your ecology study.

One of your committee members acts as the School Liaison Officer and they actively engage with you on community based work.

Throughout your entry you have successfully attracted grants and funded projects all which have led to the sustained success of your work programme.

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

Well done on erecting 26 new street name signs throughout the town. You contributed over €1000 of your own money towards this initiative and it looked very well. You also replaced 6 missing Heritage Trail signs. This was of note as many communities do not audit or review existing signs.

Lovely black and blue banners celebrating Ardee looked very well along the Main Street mounted on Victorian-styled posts. Whilst additional bunting and flags can look messy these looked very well and enhanced the image of the main street.

Exploring Ardee it was great to see many older buildings cleverly reused such as Wogan's interiors so it was upsetting to see this now closed. There are some lovely traditional premises such as Hamills and then more modern buildings such as the Fire Station and CourtHouse blended well into the area.

Murals at Bridge Street car park were admired though this is probably the last year they will survive before they disintegrate. There are some lovely period houses and buildings in Ardee and it would be good to see national political support to encourage more of such premises to be occupied. For example there were two lovely Georgian terraced buildings with arched carriageway entries beside Expert Electrical.

The red brick building housing the Bank of Ireland was a nice designed building and presented very well. Your adjudicators looked forward to seeing the Castle finished after completion of construction works. The many flags at the school looked well and demonstrated their commitment to different initiatives including the Green Flag scheme. Across the road the papal bunting looked well at the Church.

There are many business premises along the Main Streets that use pull-down exterior shutters when closed. Unfortunately the use of these shutters does not add to the Streetscape. On a warm evening exploring Ardee they give a negative impression. So your adjudicator would like to commend those businesses in Ardee that use internal

shutters or whose window displays look very well outside of business hours. These include (but are not exclusive to) O'Neill's Menswears; Paint Shop & Home & Garden Stores; Bambino; Nails Studio; Pasma (shoes and handbags), Revolve; Moods; Sharkey & Sons; Simply Fashion and Donal McCoey Pharmacy. There are other lovely buildings on the Main Street that are no longer occupied and it would be great to have some sort of incentive scheme to encourage the use such as the Ardee bread company. This is a great idea but now in a number of places, such as Martins shop, they may need to be redone or replaced with an interior window display. One closed and derelict building had an unusual approach by placing a line of shrubs in planters behind a mesh fence and this was add good improvement to the facade. Long term removal of overhead wires should be part of your long-term plan for Ardee. A number of closed buildings have had murals painted on plywood. The candy colours of Finlay's Sweets and Treat Shop caught the eye so the shop front enhancement scheme certainly worked.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

It was great to visit Ardee just after the all-Ireland floral display festival as every business had made an effort to show the support. Hanging baskets, window boxes, even displays at the entrance to the Credit Union were noticed. Local tree surgeons have supplied wood chippings that you have used in planting schemes such as the Railway Walk. The outdoor gym and playground looked very well and it was good to see it in use on a warm day. The 1916 trees in Market Square were admired and it was great to have the explanations as to who they were dedicated. Blue public seating in Ardee looked well. The many statues and sculptures through Ardee were enjoyed, from the simple angel to the emotional Cuchulainn and Ferdia monument in Bridget Street. Whilst you are already doing this along the Railway Walk, have you also considered choosing plants in your more formal landscaping scheme that would also be of benefit to our pollinators. Many varieties of bedding plants and shrubs are as hardy and attractive, whilst also being of benefit to wildlife too. Your adjudicator was delighted to read that you saved 2500 litres of water that you harvesting and used to manage your panting schemes.

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

Walking round Ardee it was a delight to see the many mature trees throughout the area. You seem to nurture these over the decades of your involvement in the competition. In you report you say a number had to be removed because they were a danger. Thankfully you have worked on a number of extensive tree and hedge planting projects including native hedge planting along Railway Walk and Fairgreen. The Riverwalk is a lovely amenity to have in the centre of the town. Well done on completing the series of wildlife information signs along the Railway Walk. The CRIB information signs about invasive species were good to have. There were some bits of fresh litter here which no doubt would be quickly picked up but in the tributary there was a lot of accumulated litter. It also suggested you remove or replace the anti-dog fouling sign here. Overall you are following the recommendations and ideas from the ecology report. Have you organised any guided walks to link in with the new information boards? Have the schools joined in with some of the citizen science projects such as the Big Garden Birdwatch organised by ? What bugs are renting rooms in your insect hotel? Is there information there explaining the importance of insects to our ecosystems? You are doing some great work with bird boxes and insect hotels but your adjudicator would like to see more of the community involved – maybe each family could assemble and monitor their own bird box for example with your assistance to erect them in a public place?

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

This submission contained some great facts and figures to support your actions for this category of the competition. It was great to read in your detailed submission of the energy savings and cost savings by local businesses participating in the local mentoring scheme supported by SEAI. Curtains on display chillers, switch off campaigns, low energy light bulbs, timers installed for beer coolers all simple actions leading to great energy savings of 13,270 kWh and €1960 by just two local business (Breen's Mace and Landy's Harp Bar).

The redeveloped community school included many eco features with large south facing windows to allow for natural gain for example, and rain water harvesting. Over 200 bicycles were sold locally under the 'Cycle To Work' scheme. Children and families are also involved with 94% of school children now joining in the recycling lunch box schemes. One very simple act was noticed at The Friends of St Luke's charity shop – this was the listing of every leaving cert pupils name and wishing them good luck. This lovely gesture should also attract the students to use the shop. Purchasing and reusing old clothes is another way of managing our resources sustainably.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have and follow a detailed litter management plan. Well done to the litter volunteers who had picked up litter and placed in bags ready for collection. It was great to see so many out on a Monday morning brushing and cleaning and tidying the streets and parks of Ardee. The bottle bank at The Park was obviously well used but appeared quite grubby possibly from tree sap. Could the signs and the banks themselves a cleaned? The exterior gable wall of the Tenanty & Sons Bar has a large broken sign that does not look good. Christmas lights on the library are not appropriate out of season and your adjudicator was also concerned to see Christmas trees on the front of the castle. On a small section of river walk by Bridge Street car park there is a large national development plan sign dated 2000 – 2006. This is well past its necessary display date and should be removed. In Bridge Street car park there are three old metal posts no longer holding any signs. Can they be removed? One

action to be included in a long-term plan for Ardee is the undergrounding of electricity wires along the Main Street and the upgrading of junction boxes that look quite ugly.

It was good to see that you are trying to act upon last year's adjudication comments about the sewer vent pipes. Do continue to lobby for help with enhancement. On a similar note the two flagpoles outside the Health Centre on the Main Street are very rusty. Turning onto the L1233 towards Ardee house there is an old street sign for Dublin or Mullingar hidden under the trees. Could this be enhanced?

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

Homes in Ardee in general appeared very well and many housing estates support your work. There is a nice planted roundabout at Sliabh Breagh. The apparent use of weedkiller along the edge of the river at CherryBrook estate alarmed your adjudicator. Weedkiller should rarely be used and the apparent liberal application where it could easily enter a watercourse is of concern. At the junction of Rockfield and Stony Lane there is a large grass area and it is suggested that it need not be very tightly mown. If the grass here (or even a small strip) was allowed to grow and flower it would really help our pollinators and be major contribution to the National Pollination Plan.

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

Welcome signs looked well in the same colours of the town banners.

Arriving from Carrickmacross the approach road looked well with the line of maturing trees set back from the pavement. The helmet-sculpture near the public park as you arrive from the North reflected the historical links of the town. Approaching from the South the entrance to Naomh Muire's GAA pitch looked well, as did the adjacent building also painted in matching colours! Three main roundabouts were extensively refurbished and you plan to install a piece of public art on each in the longer term which will finish off these areas to good effect.

Ardee has targeted a number of its closed buildings and painted them so for example, the old petrol pumps and garage by Finlays was very nicely presented. Maybe in time the pumps could be removed?

Concluding Remarks:

Your adjudicator enjoyed exploring Ardee and seeing how the businesses and the community and the educational bodies are working together. It was obvious that you all work together for a greater aim – the maintain and build a vibrant town of which you can be proud. Well done on your endeavours this year and every year for the past 43 years!