

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Reaghstown** Ref: **498**
County: **Louth** Mark: **311**
Category: **A** Date(s): **12/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	53	53
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41	40
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	26	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	63	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	306	311

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you Reaghstown for your entry into the 2017 national TidyTowns competition and welcome back for what is probably your 25th year in the competition congratulations on your silver anniversary! You have a lot of support from Local Authorities, local funding bodies and community schemes. Thank you for also including not just your entry form but copies of your previous long-term plan and your second Biodiversity Enhancement Plan published in 2014. These documents have some great recommendations.

It is hoped that your AGM held at the end of May went well. You plan to develop a new updated strategic plan. Do assign a lead for each action listed and review it regularly. Long term plans ensure you are strategic in your work, help in funding applications and also allow you to measure your success and achievements over the years.

Best of luck with your applications to the LEADER partnership, are these for schemes identified by the community? For a small hamlet you seem to have great community spirit and no doubt the budding actors participation in the film 'Wild Goose Lodge' will have engendered a lot of community spirit.

You work with local businesses such as the Danny Boy Pub and Dooley's Bar And Restaurant as well as key bodies such as Louth Tidytowns Together and the County Council. It is important and prudent to avail of their resources as much as possible. It is also worthy to note that whilst there is no school in your community you have endeavoured to link with the parish school in Tallanstown. You have worked hard over the last quarter of a century and this has paid dividends making you one of the leaders in this competition.

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

The main project completed this year was the playground and the Slí na Sláinte routes. Well done on the efforts to have this installed. The church in the centre of Reaghstown looked very well. On adjudication day the proposed disabled access had not been completed and it will be good when this is done. The old Post Office looks wonderful and there is certainly some green fingered talent working on this front garden. Walls and buildings and barns all presented very well. However don't be too overzealous in your tidying. It is good to have a little ivy growing in places, and have some ferns growing on stone walls as they provide much needed habitat for our wildlife.

The flower bed outside Danny Boy's pub had lovely shrubs and fragrant flowers which were enjoyed. Dooley's bar and restaurant also looked very well.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

One of the real strengths of Reaghstown is a high quality of landscaping through the village. Shrubs, plants and flowers provide structure that would be there throughout the year. The beds at the entrance to Western FC looked fantastic on adjudication day - compliments to the volunteers who manage this area. A number of scheme workers were strimming, mowing and generally tidying the grass areas of the graveyard during adjudication. There is

another lovely community space on the Arthurstown Road. It is recommended you consider the planting of flowers that would provide pollen throughout the season for our pollinators. A lot of information is available on-line from www.biodiversityireland.ie. Unfortunately the heavy-handed use of slug pellets has lost you a mark this category the competition.

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

Thank you for submitting the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan BEP. It was good to see the actions and suggestions in this report and it is hoped that it has been useful for you. Have you organised any bat walks yet as suggested – these are always popular and intriguing? You planted a wildflower area on the N2. Don't forget at the end of each season you need to strim and remove the strimmings to ensure that the nutrient load does not build up here. Wildflowers do best in nutrient poor areas. Indeed at the corners of the new car park at Western GFC some poppies and similar flowers may easily grow on such stony surfaces. Your BEP also talks of the creation of 'B-lines'. This simple action is where you allow grasses to grow longer and flower so that bees can benefit from the nectar and pollen. This is just one of the actions in the National Pollination Plan where communities are encouraged to take on board simple actions to help our pollinators.

It is fantastic to hear that you have buzzards in the area. These raptors are beautiful to watch. It is incredible to think that the population crashed and even in the mid 1960s there were still no buzzards in Ireland. You have also erected nesting boxes for birds. Have you organised a wildlife talk in the summer? These are well received and would be a good way to involve the community and raise awareness of your local wildlife. Maybe your local enthusiast birdwatcher could organise one short (30 min) birdwatching event and afterwards each family is given their own bird box to erect in their gardens?

On adjudication of volunteer was noted using electronic hedge clippers to prune the lovely native hedge by the roadside near Western FC. Whilst this is not illegal, as is not an agricultural hedge, it is not best practice to trim hedges during the bird breeding season. Even workers standing very close to such hedges may not see nesting birds fledgling birds that could be damaged in this process.

It is great to read of your efforts on weed-control using only environmentally friendly products. Some communities are now becoming totally pesticide and herbicide free!

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

By now recycling should be well embodied in the community and in this category the competition we are looking for initiatives regarding resource management. Does the church use energy light bulbs or pushbutton tap's? Hopefully residents will avail of the 'Better Energy Upgrade' programme that commenced in Dunleer. Do gather some statistics from local participants on the energy savings as a result of their involvement with this programme. It was great to read that you reused old telegraph poles for the upgrade works in the car park of the Danny boy Pub. This looked really well. Is also good to note that you recycle and compost your grass cuttings and flowers at two units in the village. Do you use this home-made compost in your landscaping though? It did not appear so and it would be a good thing for you to do.

Your adjudicator was very interested to read of your use of old coal bags as a weed suppressant. If it works, and you don't end up with plastic everywhere, and it stops these bags from going into landfill that's great.

You are also commended for managing and emptying your mini-recycling centre. This takes effort and well done for this.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Great effort was put into tidying Reaghstown community which looked very well on adjudication day. It was good to learn of your annual litter audit. What are the main types of litter in the village? Is any dumped from passing cars? The car park at Western FC was in the throes of development on adjudication day and should look really good once complete. On adjudication day there are a lot of stockpiles of stone and debris etc. that no doubt would be sorted in due course. Street bins were clean and empty and it is good that they are adequate for your needs as determined by your litter audit. The glass recycling centre was easily accessed and was nice and clean.

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

The different coloured homes in Mountain View looked well. The red and white cottage at the rear had some colourful hanging baskets, the green and white painted home looked well, and the modern blue home was very nicely renovated. There is a lovely silver birch tree here.

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

Arriving into Reaghstown from the N2, your left in no doubt that you are welcome to somewhere special and well cared for by the local community. The old churns on the cart remind the visitor of the tradition farming in this community. The shrubs and beds here looked very well, the grass is maintained and there are lovely climbers softening the overhead barriers into the car park which is a lovely touch. Your adjudicator particularly like these climbing plants.

It will be good to have slow down signs installed near Western GFC as this would be a busy entrance especially during match times.

On all the entrance roads into Reaghstown there is a raised stone bed in which a lovely nameplate is displayed. On adjudication day they had recently been planted, but sadly every single one of these raised beds seems to have been smothered in slug pellets. The recently exposed Old Louth Bank Wall looked very well. But it appeared as if

weedkiller had been liberally sprayed at the base of walls on the Arthurstown Road. Sadly the weedkiller and slug pellets are in contradiction to the actions outlined in your Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, and statements in your entry form. Your adjudicator suspects that maybe more training and communication is needed within 'Team Reaghstown'.

Concluding Remarks:

There are talented gardeners in the village. Nearly every corner of the village presented well and certainly demonstrate a community that is cared for by its residents. Be careful not to be too over-zealous in your 'tidying' and ensure the whole team knows your policies on chemical control. You have excellent support documents so do remember to refer to these. Thank you Reaghstown for your work in 2016 and 2017.