

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Straffan** Ref: **385**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **330**
Category: **C** Date(s): **25/06/2018**
02/08/2018

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	47
Streetscape & Public Places	50	39	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	42	43
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	40	40
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	15	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	68
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	40
TOTAL MARK	450	325	330

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Straffan Teach Sraifain chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. The village of Straffan is welcomed to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2018. Thank you for your comprehensive submission which was very informative and clear. The maps and aerial photographs provided in your submission were very well put together with legends provided and assisted greatly in the adjudication of your Village. You are also thanked for your comprehensive 3 Year Work Project Plan 2018-2020 which sets out a detailed programme of projects to be advanced by Straffan Tidy Towns over the next 3 years, in conjunction with your various project partners. It is so important to have defined goals and timescales in relation to advancing projects under the various competition categories and you have set this out very comprehensively with many interesting and worthwhile projects planned. Your Committee of seven members together with the help of volunteers clearly works very hard to foster a sense of pride amongst local residents in their local area. Your Committee meet at least once every two months or more frequently depending on issues which arise from time to time and you engage with local Residents Associations through those representatives invited to attend Committee Meetings. You also communicate with local residents using public notices, Whatsapp and Text Alerts. Your Committee engages with a wide range of local Organisations to achieve your goals and you also liaise with the school Green Schools Committee and assist young people to attain their Gaisce Awards. You mention that one of your key projects for this year was the holding of a Community Pledge Fun Day in conjunction with Kildare County Council and Kildare GAA with an emphasis on the promotion of the new recycling rules under the Sustainability Category and your adjudicator would be interested to know how that went? It is good that you recognise the importance of participating in the Kildare Tidy Towns Network where new ideas and techniques to enhance your Village and thereby advance in the competition can be exchanged.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

Despite having passed through Straffan on a number of occasions in the past it was the Adjudicator's first time to stop and visit your beautiful village. Straffan has a wealth of architectural features including historic buildings, stone wall boundaries and green spaces which all taken together create a wonderfully presented streetscape. The redeveloped Community Hall and landscaped area to the front, now providing for universal access, has really improved the visual appearance of this premises from the road and the planted areas to the front continue to be maintained to a very high standard. Scoil Bhride National School was visited and the overall presentation of the school grounds and frontage impressed as did the outdoor classroom, which no doubt was very well used this year. It is noted that you plan to develop a Heritage Trail for the village based on an Archaeological Historical Report previously prepared and an information booklet will be provided as a guide for this purpose. It was good to see works in progress on the Straffan GAA grounds which appeared to be the development of an all-weather pitch. The Lych or Memorial Gate at the entrance to the cemetery is a unique feature of the village and it is good that you

engage with the Heritage Officer before undertaking any maintenance works, which would be due shortly. We visited the graveyard through the Yew tree avenue and noted the use of water butts to harvest rainwater. An area along the wall has been reserved for wild flower planting and the ox-eye daisies were in full bloom. An interesting old churchyard accessed from the Boreen Road was visited and what looked like an old church in ruins and very old gravestones were noted. It is presumed this site will be included in the planned Village Heritage with historical information erected on site.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The presentation of green spaces and landscaping in Straffan Village is to a very high standard. The attention to detail shown in your work such as the careful edging of grass open space areas, maintenance of grass margins and footpaths, cleaning of paved areas and the successful cultivation of wonderful floral displays located throughout the village, during what has been a very long dry period. You have been successful in establishing herbaceous-type planting schemes at various locations and the maintenance of these beds in all cases is excellent. Your village is graced with many fine mature trees and it is noted that you have completed a survey of the Horse Chestnut trees on New Road. The clipped holly tree at Lodge Park estate was particularly admired and no doubt this tree will be spectacular when it is adorned with the new LED lighting scheme at Christmas time.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

You have undertaken a number of projects under this category heading this year. There are many natural habitats in the countryside surrounding your village and completing a Wildlife Report is an important step in raising awareness of these. The approaches to your village are characterised by stone walls and natural hedgerows which are important wildlife corridors and you manage these carefully e.g. along the Barberstown Road and the Ardrass Road taking into account the need to protect biodiversity and at the same time ensure the safety of road users. A Pondnet frogspawn survey has been undertaken and it would be interesting read the results of this. The insect hotel at Scoil Bhríde was admired and this was complemented by a Bee Ireland Workshop which took place in April this year.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

It is great to note that the results of your waste monitoring survey for waste generated by Coarsemoor, St Bridget's Terrace and Lodge Park Estates has shown a marked reduction in waste produced by these estates and an increase in recyclable materials generated in 2017, as compared with 2016. This is a very positive trend. You are also successfully engaging in a wide range of environmental initiatives under this category heading such as recycling of mobile phones, school uniforms, scrap metal etc. and the promotion of local awareness regarding reducing food waste, energy and water conservation and World Earth Day. The use of drought tolerant Geranium plantings in your floral displays is a useful water saving technique, particularly important having regard to the current water shortages. For next year you could consider further initiatives under this category such as developing an on-site car-pooling and park and ride facility, promoting the use of low carbon vehicles, pursuing the installation of an e-car charge point(s) in the village and extending cycle parking facilities in the village. The possible development of greenways and cycle routes in the wider area could be investigated, where this is feasible. The further promotion of grant aid for the installation of wall and attic insulation on older building stock, the greater use of solar panels on roofs and heat exchange units to reduce energy consumption by households/businesses is a worthwhile initiative to consider. The greater use of water butts for the watering of private gardens during the Summer period might also be further encouraged. The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland website has good information in relation to the development of Better Energy Communities.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village of Straffan was very clean and tidy on the day of adjudication with a general absence of litter. The residents living in Straffan obviously have a great sense of pride in their village and the efforts by all concerned in relation to general tidiness and litter control are to be commended. Road signage was clean and unimpeded by vegetation and the Fáilte heritage signage and street signage was greatly admired. Your efforts in relation to the daily litter picks and annual Keep Kildare Clean initiative and engagement with young people are obviously bearing fruit.

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

The residential properties on the Boreen Road with their attractive stone wall boundaries, ornate gates and colourful well-maintained gardens, complemented the overall high-quality presentation of the village. You engage well with estate residents and individual housing estates are presented to a very high standard. Straffan Manor estate was visited and the small sunken wildlife area, reserved for flood attenuation was positively noted. The Beeches and Barton Grange estates are noteworthy for their clipped hornbeam street trees which create a very impressive formal entrance to these estates. The small area managed for wildflowers on the very well maintained open space at Coarsemoor Estate was particularly admired. Straffan Gate estate was visited and the presentation of open spaces and private gardens was to a high standard and the entrance to the estate is enhanced by appropriate shrub planting.

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

Despite the significant road traffic through the village the road surfaces on the approaches and within the village itself are generally in a good condition, although some road markings may need to be renewed. Roadside grass margins and boundary hedgerows, old stone walls and boundary fences are very well maintained and provide a

very positive experience for road users. Road signage is generally very clean and is not obscured by vegetation.

Concluding Remarks:

The sense of pride which the residents of Straffan have shown in their local area is very evident as one experiences your village at close quarters. The forward planning, organisation and hard work carried out by your Committee over many years has ensured your continued progression in the Tidy Towns Competition. You are wished every success in the future.

Second Round Adjudication:

We welcomed the opportunity to visit the picturesque village of Straffan. The splash of colour at the Barberstown roundabout provides a welcoming effect. The hedgerows on either side enhance the approach road as do the attractive 'Welcome' and 'Slán' signs. There is a lovely ambience in the village centre, mainly because of the quality of the built heritage and your enthusiasm to keep everything so beautifully maintained. Both churches have focal positions and add to the aesthetic. Businesses are neatly presented including the Straffan Inn, Mace, Quirke café and the adjacent Beauty Salon. The grounds of Scoil Bhríde were admired, with its colourful window boxes and baskets as well as outdoor classroom. The attractive flower bed to the roadside enhances this approach to the village. The Community Hall is a beautifully presented property, obviously a major source of pride for the community. The landscaping here impressed. The standard in residential areas is excellent – in both older and more recent developments. Well done to all Straffan residents who obviously have strong pride in their village. The landscaping in your newer developments is finished to a high standard. A nice mix of trees, flowers and shrubs was noted. We commend your efforts to plant perennials for lower maintenance, water conservation and wildlife encouragement. Hopefully in any future developments, efforts will be made to preserve ecological corridors. Your efforts to encourage residents and businesses to reduce their environmental input is commended. We would urge you to continue to come up with practical ideas in this regard. The village was very clean on the day. Apart from a couple of random pieces, it was litter-free. A road sign on the main road needs attention. The stunning K-Club entrances greatly enhance this approach road. Your strong sense of community involvement and pride of place ensures that Tidy Towns works in partnership with local residents, businesses and other relevant organisations for the ongoing enhancement of Straffan. This adjudicator concurs with the comments and marks of your 1st round adjudicator. Well done to all in Straffan for an excellent presentation.