

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clough** Ref: **411**
County: **Laois** Mark: **296**
Category: **A** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	36	38
Streetscape & Public Places	50	38	40
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	41	42
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	21	21
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
TOTAL MARK	450	287	296

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Clough (Chloch) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. You were certainly busy this year! Your village walk survey identified a possible 42 improvements that could be undertaken. These seemed to feed into Recommendation Review which then helped formulate your 3 year Tidy Towns Plan. This provides a great structure for your current and future planning. Your host of partners in this quest is impressive, from the local businesses that provide you with sponsorship and venues for meetings, along with the agencies that should prove a valuable resource in terms of guidance and expertise, through to your local bodies who should also benefit more directly from the work done in improving your village.

The subcommittee involved in improving your map are to be commended. All of the necessary details were here along with a suitable legend. It looks like a lot of work went into this. Don't forget for next year you can use the same basic core map and just highlight the projects.

It is a wonderful undertaking to offer assistance to older residents within the village to undertake any upkeep that may be required. It is this type of project that ensures social cohesion.

You are demonstrating what can happen when people work together. Coming up to adjudication day, on your Facebook page you reminded your community that the "tasks are getting smaller".

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

As you enter the village you come across High Nelly Cottage which is a picture-perfect whitewashed cottage with a manicured thatch roof. What makes this even more impressive is the information from your submission that this work was undertaken by groups of volunteers as part of your village-wide painting programme. The bicycle with the baskets of flowers by the old stone wall is very innovative.

Opposite High Nelly Cottage is another wonderful old cottage. Even though its roof is not thatched, the rose garden more than adds to the charm here. It is a sight to behold.

The school building is an obvious thriving hub. The work you have carried out this year in painting the school wall and railings and also painting the exterior school wall are having great effect in uplifting the other great features of this school. The mural of country scenes is very striking and apt, echoing your surroundings.

St. Canice's Church is an imposing structure and quite large for a village of your size. It is well maintained, as are the grounds. We noted that it is on the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage.

The graveyard has many fine examples of Celtic crosses. The boundary itself was looking well. The community centre was given a friendly, welcoming entrance by the addition of the colourful scarecrows.

The new gravel on the carpark at Mary's pub does improve this area. Mary's pub itself was looking very well. The amount of well-preserved stone walls both on buildings such as here and on as boundary walls are to be commended. It gives your village a lovely traditional look.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The Kiln is well preserved, enhanced by this year's maintenance. A wonderful feature is that you can get close and touch it. Due to health and Safety sometimes our preserved heritage is closed off. While there was colour here in the baskets, we did feel that those harsh railing bar took away a bit from the visual appeal. In the future, you might consider replacing these with hedging if possible [or growing hedging to cover them].

Sorbus Aucuparia ornamental trees were seen planted in the community garden. This is a good choice, as these have flowers which provide pollen and nectar for bees and other pollinating insects, while the berries are a rich source of autumn food for birds.

We agree with your future plans that this appears to be an ideal location to expand into more of a recreational area, to include a picnic bench. Creating social spaces are so important to provide opportunities for those in a community to engage with each other.

There are many beautiful examples of green areas throughout your small village. The shrubbery just outside the school demonstrates how low maintenance perennial planting can be effective. The shrubbery just outside the housing estate is another great example of this. You currently seem to have a seven day rota for this.. Having someone look after it for 7 days is a good idea – it isn't just watering, it's also tying up falling bits, taking out litter, weeding and maybe re-distributing mulch.

The rockery at the pub carpark was looking well. You mentioned putting rose bushes into this in June 2018. While this had not happened by day of adjudication, more pollinator plants might suit this area better.

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

This appears to be an area that you have earmarked for more projects for the future. We noted your plans to engage with groups such as Birdwatch Ireland, Bee Keepers Group, County Council run biodiversity projects, among others. It is always encouraged to seek the advice that is available. For assistance in this category you can also peruse <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie>

The wooden wild garden & composting area signs fit in well with their surrounds. The creation of a wildflower gardens and other habitats are very important. Everyone can play their part in small, simple ways. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan gives guidance to all, from farmers to local authorities, to schools, gardeners and businesses, to come together to try to create an Ireland where pollinators can survive and thrive. <http://pollinators.ie/communities/> The colourful sign of "Our pumpkin patch" draws the interest towards your community garden. Again your submission helped to enhance this project by explaining that each year you try to include a different project to enhance children's learning, while helping out in the community. This year, in conjunction with a local family, you aim to do this on a bigger scale and any money raised will be given to local charities and also to the Tidy Towns group. We look forward to seeing the results of this Win-Win project in next year's submission.

Some bird boxes were observed. Let us know if they are inhabited.

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

It was lovely to see the sign in your composting area that includes what can and cannot be included in composting. Sometimes, with the best will in the world, the compost can become contaminated with materials that do not belong there and can cancel out the good works that others are trying to achieve.

A lot of your projects are in the planning stage for this year, such as increasing the number of people using your composting and poly tunnel. Please provide details of this in next year's submission. From your photo of the tomato plants for sale from your poly tunnel there is certainly work going on there.

"No Junk Mail" signs were spotted including in No 9 and outside High Nelly Cottage. From your Facebook page I saw that these are "bespoke high made slate signs". We add our voice to your congratulations to the talented Liam Bergin

The four bins at the Bring Centre were well kept. We note on your tasks that these were washed by a volunteer. It does help to discourage people from littering around these areas if they are well maintained. Each had been utilised. In a future submission, outlining the amount of times these are emptied would be helpful in demonstrating the rate of recycling. Furthermore, always ensure that projects to reduce and reuse are given a higher priority. Consider putting a link to the public transport timetable on view in the village, as not everybody accesses Facebook. Don't forget to include any projects that the school may be involved in. Your submission can include any projects carried out by others in your area under the Tidy Towns categories, not just the work carried out by members of your committee.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You have a comprehensive program for litter control and it is having very good results. Well done on your participation in Laois Clean up Week.

However there were two specimens of dog fouling in two different areas.

Your weeding program is being operated to a very high standard, in the flower beds and shrubberies and also on the paths and verges.

Your co-ordinated painting program, which you say was the largest one ever undertaken in the village at one time, has certainly brightened and lifted the area.

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

You are fortunate to have such high level quality housing in your area. The two cottages mentioned earlier provide wonderful traditional examples. These high standards have been upheld in more recent builds. The Limekiln housing estate is kept in the highest order, as are the houses on the road opposite the cottages. Pride of Place is evident amongst all of your residents.

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

Your attention to detail on tending the grass on the approach roads to your village is paying off. We know from previous areas the amount of work that can be involved in renovating old pumps and the surrounding areas. Well done on acting once more on the advice of last year's adjudicator. What was the feedback regarding engagement with local land owners on the importance of managing the biodiversity of your natural roadside hedgerows?

We certainly endorse your project of enhancing the footpath network of your village. We concur that this would not only have social benefits but also increased environmental benefits, by reducing the dependency on cars.

Concluding Remarks:

On our visit, we saw that Clough gives the impression of a well cherished village with the residents taking pride and care in its upkeep. Well done to all concerned.