

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Durrow** Ref: **412**
County: **Laois** Mark: **318**
Category: **B** Date(s): **19/06/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	48
Streetscape & Public Places	50	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	46	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	35
TOTAL MARK	450	309	318

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Durrow (Darú) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais.

Welcome back to the 2018 national Tidy Towns competition. The list of agencies and groups that you work with is both impressive and extensive. A lot of this work in action was viewed on your Facebook page and on www.Durrow.ie.

Once again, your submission is very well structured and set out. We look forward to viewing your five year Durrow sustainable communities plan next year. The results of the significant investment received for phase 1 of your Durrow regeneration can be seen throughout your village, and we expect to see similar results from phase 2.

Your community's ability to harness support for its many activities is to be commended. The Scarecrow Festival is a fantastic example of this. It is not surprising that this has been nominated twice for "Best Festival" in the Irish Times Ticket Awards. The thought, dedication, and imagination that goes into this event is obvious.

Lack of resources hinders the completion of many worthy Tidy Towns projects. Sometimes with the best will in the world, the financial resources may not be there. It was to your credit that you have itemised, on your Facebook page and on www.Durrow.ie, the many ways people can help; the "Hour and a Half Gang", farmers with tractors and loaders to remove or bring in materials, fundraising, etc. What a great way to harness community spirit.

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

Those viewing Durrow for the first time have to be impressed with your inheritance of built heritage, but having visited so many other towns and villages throughout Ireland the conservation and presentation of these buildings is what makes it so inspirational. You have many future projects that you are involved in that we are sure will come under your five year plan. Two of these we are most looking forward to include the community building on the Cork Road and the three-storey Georgian house on the square, which has been purchased and is in the process of being restored to its former glory. As with all Tidy Towns groups, we ask you to highlight not just work that you are involved in directly, but also projects by others that help create an environment where the preservation of what is good in the community is valued and supported.

The main square area must be amongst the most impressive in the country, providing a billboard for your built heritage.

On the more commercial side of the square, the Castle Arms hotel and Happy Days crèche look well and it's great to see vitality in the town. Bowes café looked particularly well. Bob's bar adds a lot of charm and character! In general the upkeep of the commercial property was impressive.

It is unfortunate that the wall of the HSE building is not maintained to the same high standard as the surrounding buildings. If you make contact with any agency remember to let us know. We know that you cannot always force

them to do the works, but encouraging them is recommended.

Some nice street signs were noted as Gaeilge with lovely Gaelic script. Don't forget to highlight these as the use of the Irish Languages will get you extra points in this section. The signs for Sráid an tSéipéil and Sráid Pádraig opposite were observed.

The Catholic church looks well. The grounds could benefit from just the odd addition of colour but the grass area was very well maintained as well the trees. The gates and railings here might make a very worthwhile future project.

The scouts' den is a fantastic architectural building. Cleaning of the red doors would enhance this further. The planter boxes looked well against the paintwork.

On your report you mentioned the community centre was recently re-painted. It looks like this had not yet been done on adjudication day.

The mural was not yet started at Phelan's, but the preparation work was viewed and the bright green outline will tie in nicely with the bright green across the road. We are very much looking forward to seeing the finished design. It is a wonderful way to use a derelict space to celebrate the past while also providing an interesting and colourful display for the present.

In the height of summer we cannot view the effects of your new efficient street lighting, but this is a worthy project to pursue. Thank you for including this in your submission.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Little green oases of public space with good seating areas and colour are dotted around your village and enhance it greatly.

The seating area surrounded by the stone wall on the way from the community centre to the main square, known locally as "The Pump", has some great shrubbery planting supplemented by more colourful flowers. The oak sculpture was admired.

The area by the restored village pump is a beautiful sight to behold. However it is slightly let down by the fact that the lampposts are quite dirty as was the litter bin. Cleaning these would do a lot here.

We passed by this area later on in our adjudication and were really impressed to see a grandmother encouraging her young grandson to "smell the roses". It is lovely to see nature not just being used as a visual backdrop but also as something that should be enjoyed.

The seating area in the square provides an amazing social space. However the street furniture could benefit from cleaning.

The river area is a lovely feature especially when it has the impressive stone bridge as its backdrop. It really adds to the village and is in great condition. It is not surprising that you have such an active Canoe and Kayak club.

The area at the Fire Station is very well maintained, with the new planting adding to this. There was a wire basket at the corner (we were unsure of its intended purpose) but people had left their rubbish in it in a bid to not litter the area. Some of the new paint work on the seats was already peeling. Your photos showing the "before" and "after" pictures displayed the improvements to the furniture and area underneath. Maybe a different product should be considered for the future.

The view from the Old Mill walking back towards town is one of acres of green fields with majestic trees, old stone cut buildings nestled beside the wonderful river...then a breeze block wall is put amidst this! We would encourage you to ask the owner to consider planting to help hide this.

The sign for Laois at the Old Mill, while informative, needed to be cleaned.

The larger planter boxes throughout the village were lovely and do not obstruct the path. The iron hanging baskets were admired. If you hadn't mentioned this as a new project it could be assumed these were here for years, they fit in so well.

With your rich array of mature trees it is good to see you consulting with experts to ensure their proper care.

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

Biodiversity is under threat and unfortunately Ireland is following this trend. The ethos of the Tidy Towns competition has evolved since it first started 60 years ago to include focusing on this. You are more fortunate than most in having a Biodiversity teacher on your committee now. The three areas to look at here for the future are: Education, Conservation and Celebration.

Your trend to switch from annual to perennial displays is to be encouraged. Pollinator friendly perennials have the added benefit of generally being more cost effective. They have a potential life span of 10-12 years if properly maintained. Small amounts of annual replacement can supplement as well as complement plants already in place. Your new project of featuring a Wildlife Gardening and Composting section at the Scarecrow Festival, to raise the awareness of the importance of wildlife and how small changes to our gardens can make a positive significant impact to our environment, could prove a worthy enhancement in this area. Remember to ask people to report back to the committee for next year's submission outlining any changes they have made, to monitor the impact.

Your river offers you a lot of potential in this category. Ensure that you include more details of the work carried out by the agencies involved in the preservation of the waterway and bank areas.

The bird and bat boxes were noted throughout your village. Please give any information that you have on their usage.

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

We believe that this is an area in which you could make great progress over the coming years. We noted that you were awarded Silver in Environmental Awareness at the Laois PPN awards in 2017. What projects were included for this?

Remember to contact the County Council and other Tidy Towns groups for ideas in this area. You might get some handy tips at <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/>

We note from their website that Our Lady's Meadow primary school currently has four flags for Litter and Waste, Energy, Water Conservation, and Travel. Green flags require a lot of work and these are not awarded lightly. It would be great to see some of the projects that the national school is involved in. Maybe a small team of 6th class students could do this next year? We only need a few bullet points of the main achievements to award extra marks. Remember to include any initiatives that local businesses are taking. Being environmentally friendly doesn't have to always be a cost for businesses... it can be a help in driving revenue, reducing costs or a mix of both. Many are moving to more energy saving plans as a result. They also might be involved with Repak. We did note the move by Bowes Café to encourage customers to use their own coffee cups. Are they noticing a reduction in costs as a result of this?

You obviously concentrated on water conversation this year with your new water butts. Good timing! It was a great idea to get the local school children involved in devising a logo for your water harvesting system. This summer they will be more aware of the importance of "Don't Drain The Rain", considering the lack of it.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your participation with Laois Clean up week. We would welcome more details on how you organise your volunteer clean-ups at other times. In general the village had little litter.

In last year's submission you mentioned you were setting up a Junior Litter Warden Programme. How did this go? Unfortunately there was litter on the square of day of adjudication. However when we passed through Durrow later in the day, this had been rectified. The litter bins seemed very full so obviously people are using them and they even left their extra litter around them, but in the windy Irish weather this doesn't always stay tidy for long. You are obviously alert to this and remedy it quickly.

We were particularly impressed with your link up with Laois Country Council, alerting home and businesses as to when the road sweeper will be in operation in order to ensure the maximum effect from this exercise.

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

You are fortunate to have a wide variety of good residential properties and estates.

The houses on the way down to the village from the Kilkenny side are in general in good repair. The narrow path here reduces the scope for planting softening.

Many of the houses throughout the village had colourful planter boxes and were well painted, especially near the main square.

St. Fintan's Terrace was a riot of colour. It is good to see the move toward more perennials.

The grass edging was done but chemicals have been used. We discourage such use of chemicals, favouring more environmentally friendly alternatives such as physical removal.

Derrywood is very well maintained with a good open space.

We saw from your post that you are looking to have a representative from each road/area to become involved in coming up with their own ideas to improve their area and help in implementing them. This should certainly help here.

The impressive children's playground is well maintained. The area under the flying fox had recently been re-done.

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

Overall the verges were well kept back and the signage was clean.

On the approach Road from the Kilkenny side, the contrast between letters and background on the welcome sign could be heightened to improve legibility. The planting here was very nice. One of the speed signs was turned the wrong way.

The sign coming in on the Cork Road was much easier to read and the planting on this road was very imaginative and unusual. The old school building looks like it could make a very interesting project. The Texaco station would benefit from some softening with planting.

The Cork Road should be greatly enhanced by your proposed planting scheme future project.

Entering from the Abbeyleix side the Mill Wheel area is a striking first impression. Your work here was admired.

The new gravel, while looking well, may also assist in weed control.

Leaving Durrow on the road to Ballcolla passing by the river area must leave the visitor with a good memory of your village. However the black bollards going out toward the GAA pitch were quite dirty. Due to the number of these, the grime makes them unsightly.

Concluding Remarks:

Durrow village has some wonderful built heritage and it is great to see that conservation measures continue to be undertaken. Your new focus on ensuring the conservation of the biodiversity aspect of your village should lead to a healthier environment.

You seem to be a village that is very focused. When you set about doing something, you do it to the highest standard by getting as many people involved as possible. We wish you continued success in all of your ventures.