

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Emo** Ref: **413**
County: **Laois** Mark: **315**
Category: **A** Date(s):

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	42	42
Streetscape & Public Places	50	41	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	43	44
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	37	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	64	64
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
TOTAL MARK	450	311	315

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

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

Welcome to the 2018 Tidy Towns competition. You mentioned in your 2017 submission that you had two people on your committee, but we notice that this year that number has increased to 5. You must have Trojan workers to achieve so much with so few. You also revealed last year that you had trouble getting some extra help from the CE scheme. It seems that you have someone this year, and your place is looking the better for it.

You mention that your 2019 application form will be electronic if you hold your numbers. Maybe there is someone in the community that could take this particular task over from you? Ensure to encourage them to read the Tidy Towns website for help on filling out the submission. We only need a few bullet points on each project. "Before" and "After" photos where appropriate also add to any report. A picture says a thousand words!

Your Map was bright, colourful and easy to follow, thank you. You have included a number of future projects that will benefit your village. We are encouraging all groups to complete a 3 year plan. It provides a focus and helps you to prioritise. It does not have to be professionally done up. Just a page with the three years 2019, 2020, 2021 and a few bullet points under each. Alternatively have a table showing if the project is new, ongoing or a future project. It is usually satisfying for Tidy Towns groups to see at a glance all of the work that has been carried out in one year. The various organisations and clubs that assist you including the GAA club and the Retirement Group, is usually a sign of a healthy community. It is always wonderful to see your co-ordination with the youth. You mention your work with Emo national school and youth club which both take part in your litter clean ups. This generally has the double effect of cleaning up the area for the present but hopefully (and even more importantly) creating an environment where the children become more aware of the need to keep their environment clean.

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

The old National School appears to be going through a renovation as scaffolding was spotted here. We noticed from your website that this is now a play school. It is always commendable for old buildings to not be left derelict and be used in a meaningful way.

Your village seems to be a hive of activity in terms of renovations which is good to see including; the new site near the shop, the site across the road from the shop where the refurbishment of a current derelict building for use as a dwelling house is currently underway. This should be a substantial residence when finished and add to the built environment of your village. It is always a vote of confidence to an area where people feel it is worth investing in improving it.

Emo National School is an example of very good planning in a complex area. Close by there is a GAA club beside a soccer pitch. On day of adjudication there were children using all fields. One group on the GAA pitch, another group using the soccer field, yet another was using the schools own sports field. It is great use of resources when

facilities are grouped together to ensure greater usage by all the community at different times, rather than having more (or worse none) that are not operating at maximum capacity.

The boarded up house of M Ní Floinn could easily be an eye sore for your village. Instead the understated blue colouring of the building and bright red door serves as a lovely backdrop to this traditional Irish signage feature. It is important to try and preserve the amazing array built heritage. While the gate house at the entrance to Emo Court had lovely stone work, the brown PVC door at the extension to the side took from this gem.

The Pony Shed is celebrating its 100th birthday in good style. The donor of the shed, James Dunne, who erected it in 1918 "for all time for people attending the church", must be getting what he wished for.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The restoration of your replica pump is a project that should have a lasting legacy for you. Thank you for the inclusion of your "before" photo here. It is truly remarkable that this is the same area. You have certainly achieved your aim of providing a focal point. To enhance this further perhaps in the future a seating area could be provided. Providing meeting places in public spaces allows the community better opportunities to engage with one another. While flowers in planters do provide a great splash of colour it is important that they containers do not hinder the continuity of the walkability of the village. Thanks for acting on the advice of last year's adjudicator and removing some of the bigger planters. The remaining ones are well maintained.

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

Your Wildflower Meadow plan in support of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is to be commended. Sometimes group feel that are "wild" flowers do just that, grow wild, that no planning is needed. Your 5 year action plan should certainly help in your aim to provide a habitat for pollinators. Simple tasks such as a number of soils faces being maintained in an embankment on the eastern side in order to provide nesting habitats for mining bees gives a potential home to some of our pollinators. Remember the importance of your dry stone walls as potential habitat areas.

You mention that identification and cataloguing of wild plants commenced during 2017. Please ensure any documentation/pictures that you have of this are included in next year's submission.

On your website you informed residents that this is a long term process." It will take a couple of years to establish and look its best as we are saving local seeds which is a slow process waiting for the seeds to germinate and then transplant them to their most suitable position"

Your bat boxes were noted in the village. You inform us that these are being monitored by a branch of Bat Conservation Ireland. Please ensure to include any of their findings in future submission. Is there any talks/walks given to community? Those who are bothered by the insects might appreciate the bats more if they realise they manage to help keep the flies in check. The soprano pipistelle Irelands smallest bat eats about 3,000 inserts a night. This might help communities see them more as a friend than a foe.

You have the most amazing amenity of Emo Court grounds right on your doorstep. At close to 1000 acres there are few areas in the country where the amenity is such a high proportion of their overall area. Feel free to include any projects from this area. Tidy Towns is not only about you doing the work yourselves. It is about reflecting the work in your submission that is carried out within your community. Whether that is by yourselves, a voluntary group assisting you, private individuals carrying out their own work, local authorities carrying out work or any other government agencies

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

Green flags require a lot of work and these are not awarded lightly. It would be great to see some of projects that Emo 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. The school chickens seemed happy in the shade. A water butt was spotted in the grounds. How much water is saved? (very approximate figures will do). Is it a sufficient amount that it provides the watering needs of the school garden?

There was a healthy looking vegetable garden in the school. What happens to the produce? Are the children taught about food waste?

Bikes were spotted in the bike rack of the school. Is there a school policy on encouraging the children to cycle?

The Bring centre just inside the grounds of Emo court is very well maintained. It is unfortunate that the overflow in the summer of 2017 lead to some people feeling that this gave them an excuse to engage in illegal dumping.

Certainly on day of adjudication this area was clean and tidy. The bins had items in each of them.

Thank you for including some statistics for the amount of recycling that took place here in 2017-2018. 16.29 tons of glass and .54 tons of cans.

While we would always support recycling of items, such as those provided by recycling batteries with the Laura Lynn Foundation, don't forget that recycling comes after reduce and reuse. More of an emphasis is needed on these areas. For example encourage the use of rechargeable batteries.

Even before the hot summer your group is aware of the need for improvements in your public water system which you say is prone to links. We would encourage you keep up the pressure on getting these fixed.

You can also find extra help on this category of the competition on <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/> and on the Tidy Towns website

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are to be commended for the many measures you take to ensure your village is presented in the best possible way. Your regular litter patrols are having good effect. This can't be easy in a village that attracts so many visitors.

The information signs in Emo Park were bright, colourful and clean.

Your No Poster Policy is having a worthy effect.

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

Your website states that Emo has “a mix of new and older style homes give an overall feel of a well settled community”. We concur with this assestion.

The cottages on Killimy road to the old National School are very well presented.

We note that Killimy residents association work closely with you. This community work is evident in the housing estate. The houses here are kept well. This is probably enhanced by the weekly grass cutting of the areas not managed by the individual householders. There was a lovely seating area that was being used on day of adjudication. At the end of this estate there appears to be an area left wild as well as a neat mowed edge beside it. The newer trees are spaced nicely and will enhance this area even further in the future. Two bird boxes were spotted in this area.

A number of individual well-kept houses were noted, particularly the house beside the Gate House public house. The low lying stone wall with well-kept railings allows for a full appreciation of the view this provides.

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

Travelling around Ireland for adjudication (as well as normal travel) there is a lack of lay-bys. Your picnic area gives a welcome opportunity to park the car in off the road. While there was a sign up “Planted for Wildlife”, what would look well here is a sign showing examples of the type of plants used. When you see them close up you realise that beauty is sometimes jumbled all together, it’s hard to see the wood for the trees.

The sign on the way in from the name of the road R422 was dirty on the Fáilte side. The sign at the picnic area could also do with being cleaned. While containers would prove difficult here, this area could do with some planting. You mentioned that a future project will involve sowing locally collected seeds here. A few out the front could provide the splash of colour.

The surface on the approach road from Portarlington would benefit from some resurfacing.

The welcome stone here would also benefit from a cleaning also.

The wall of Emo Court on the approach road in is very well maintained. Stone walls throughout Emo village, e.g. on the way to the old National School, down by the church etc. really add to the character of the place. We hope that these continue to be preserved.

Concluding Remarks:

This was the adjudicator first visit to your village and it certainly impressed. It has the feel of a village that has a positive future with a lot of work currently taking place there. . Congratulations on helping provide an environment where this is possible.

We certainly wish you well with all of your future projects.