

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Fenagh** Ref: **429**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **297**
Category: **A** Date(s): **21/06/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	41	42
Streetscape & Public Places	50	37	38
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	36	37
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	23	24
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	43	43
TOTAL MARK	450	289	297

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

Cuireann an moltóir fáilte roimh Fiodhnach (or Fionach) we noted that the spelling 'as Gaeilge' differs on the road sign approach and on the blue village sign.) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. We welcome you Fenagh to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition and to the celebration of the sixtieth year of the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition!

For a village with a small population it is great to see that you have 12 people on your committee with a further three people who volunteer. You hold monthly meetings at your Visitor Centre. The Visitor Centre is a tremendous resource to have in your village - one that we are sure you worked hard to put together. You tell us about your various activities and how you try to get other community members - especially new residents - involved.

Your list of agencies, bodies and businesses who support your is extensive and impressive. We particularly liked to see your reference to other Tidy Towns committees in this regard. This is the essence of the competition - cooperation amidst competition. It shows a generosity of spirit that we are sure you appreciate and reciprocate.

In communicating you use local newspaper notices, flyers and posters - as well as phone calls. You also communicate through modern channels - such as your website and Facebook page. Well done on this! In relation to providing a 'church newsletter' insert -we hope that you also circulate minority churches in your area. We note your work with the Church of Ireland restoration committee, so we are sure that they are included in all your communications.

You visit the local national school, and drop into the active age group. The children are involved in a very practical way with litter and waste issues - and also recycling and heritage issues. We will talk more about these two involvements in the following categories. Their recycling project was most impressive. Well done to the school holding Green Flag status! We see that you are hoping to form a Junior Tidy Towns group, and we think you will have greater support from the children who have already been involved in your projects - as well as from their obviously committed and imaginative teacher.

You identify four projects to which you applied particular efforts during the past year. We deal with these under their various categories. We are delighted to hear that entering the competition for the last 12 years has been "fun and healthy" as well as contributing hugely to the community in taking pride in their local area. Well done on your positive attitude in relation to how you see your groups work contributing to the development of your community i.e. You say that you will continue to improve and enhance the village and surrounding areas where possible and where funds allow. This is a positive - yet practical statement. We also liked the fact that you include the surrounding areas in your mission - as the surrounding areas use your village for business, schooling and other purposes - they really

are part of your community, and we hope that they assist you also.

Thank you for the summary of your Tidy Towns plan for your village 2018. However we would encourage you to draw up a three or five-year village plan. This would be helpful to you in deciding how you will work into the future. The plan need not be an elaborate plan, nor need it be prepared professionally. A simple document with a timescale for any projects you consider feasible and suitable over the three or five-year lifetime of the plan will suffice. These should be listed under the various category headings. This will help you to focus on what is good forward planning and also what is achievable from a practical point-of-view. It can also help to attract outside funding or other help in achieving your goals. The Tidy Towns Handbook has some helpful advice. You should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should tell us as to how you went about this consultation. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to your village in drawing up your work programme. Perhaps it would be helpful to talk to some other groups of similar size who have prepared such a plan. You are obviously already liaising with other tidy towns committees. No doubt your local authority would also be available to advise you on such a plan preparation.

Your village map was a helpful sketch plan which lettered rather than numbered all new and some maintenance/future projects throughout the entry form and map where applicable. This was clear and helpful to the adjudicator – although strictly – according to the Guidelines to the Entry form all 3 types of projects should be numbered sequentially.

We would like to thank you also for your very neat and easily understood entry form.

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

We note that you continue to work with the Church of Ireland committee working on a Peace garden at the church this year. We are anxious to know what archaeological/conservational architectural advice has been obtained in relation to the development of the footpath and garden area at the Church of Ireland? We admired the traditional stile in the stone wall in the vicinity of the church. In general your local dry stone wall tradition is very impressive. We also admired the church gates and the double wooden gates adjacent. Along the internal boundary of the church site we admired a lovely traditional hooped farm gate also. There are good views to the Abbey from the church grounds.

The Abbey is indeed an important aspect of your built environment. We liked the atmospheric sunset background at the sign with its sunset background, short history and its referencing of the Fenagh bell and the book of Fenagh.

We think that your project to create a tourist information sign is a good idea and we look forward to seeing the sign in the future. Meanwhile - the signage near the school is informative. Your village is quite linear in a number of directions and this will inform the visitor of all that is to be seen within your village boundaries.

We credit your recycling art project under this category as well as under the sustainability category. This is because of the unique public art and heritage aspects of the project - with which we are impressed. The public art aspect of the project contributes to the built environment, and educates children in the whole concept of public art. Public art forms very much part of village renewal. County Leitrim has been very attentive to the provision of public art in public housing estates. There is a percentage grant available for capital expenditure schemes in all counties which may be drawn down for public art. So keep an eye on this into the future! The project also inculcates an appreciation of Irish mythology and folklore in the students - which leads to a greater appreciation of our built heritage viz. our archaeological monuments and our architectural heritage and their settings. We particularly commend the teacher involved. Furthermore one of the items on recycled plywood commemorated the local Saint Caillin's association with your Abbey - which was appropriate. We wondered if this is the same saint as is commemorated near Clifden at St. Caillin's well? Perhaps there might be a chance for twinning here?

Unfortunately we were too late in the evening to visit the Visitors Centre. However it is excellently presented, and we admired the lovely signage and the delightful door framing planting. Well done on your clearly visible ramp area at the gable end of the centre. Furthermore you have begun to plant along the ball alley and this will improve the look of the structure into the future. However the gable of the ball alley - rising above - and adjoining the Visitor Centre requires repainting.

The school was well presented. At Quinn's - the name sign at the hill end - would benefit from upgrading.

Well done on managing to get the owners to present the unfinished building on the Ballinamore approach in a more presentable fashion through the removal of scaffolding and boarding of window apes.

Although you mention the following under Residential - we note here that you encourage local businesses to keep their shop fronts in good order and to participate in Tidy Towns activities throughout the year.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Although you say that your village lacks green space, we have to say that your lovely countryside which 'edges' into the village more than makes up for this fact. The most important thing is to maintain your dry stone walls, tree cover, hedging and incidental spaces. Do not 'go overboard' on planting in containers - as your village would become more urban in character and lose its beautiful countryside atmosphere - which many would envy! In particular the approach from Mohill with its stone walls and beautiful mature trees - leading visually into open country and the Abbey site is superb. Maintaining this landscape heritage is the most important thing to do - always remembering

that trees have a natural lifespan - and considering new plantings in the future in this regard.

We also loved the planting in the centre of the village in the gravelled area across from the Visitor Centre. We admired your planting at the Visitor Centre – and also the red boat planting and the herb garden. Well done on planting native species - and in particular this year the planting of native species on the Ballinamore approach road as part of National Tree Week. We liked the rockery above the telephone box.

We understand that you do not wish to work on the footpath area until the footpath is complete. Nonetheless you have brightened up this area with temporary pots. Do ensure that the landscaping is developed in tandem with the footpath sustainably in the soil adjacent - rather than in pots for the long term.

Planting (Irish sourced) wildflowers is always good. With regard to hanging baskets -once again we would encourage restraint in this regard as your village has such a lovely rural atmosphere. Hanging baskets can brighten up an otherwise dull area -of which you have very few.

We would encourage you to continue to use native perennial trees, shrubs/ plants and pollinator friendly plant species into the future. Talk to your County Heritage Officer (and your County Biodiversity Officer - if your local authority engages such an officer) and we are sure they will advise you. We would also encourage you to consider spring planting throughout the village. (If you carry out spring planting perhaps you might send us a photograph of the planting with next year's entry form. The reason is that such planting would have well disappeared by the time of adjudication and we would like to see how it looked.)

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

Well done on your lovely new biodiversity signs - which not alone are informative - but are suitably framed in wood which contribute to the rural character of your village. One point to note was that on adjudication day vegetation (from above) and floral displays (from below) were making it difficult to read some of the valuable signage and difficult to see some of the hexagonal designs on one of the signs.

We observed your bird and bat boxes throughout the village, and you are also ensuring that areas are uncut for wildlife purposes. You have received expert advice in relation to the location of these boxes. Well done! We noted the Birds' Nesting area in the Church of Ireland grounds. You have also attended a networking for nature event and heard from a local beekeepers' association and other biodiversity experts. You do not seem to mention your local authority Heritage Officer nor your local authority Biodiversity Officer – (does the local authority engage a Biodiversity Officer?) These are good people to help you along the way. Congratulations on winning the Cleaner and Greener Award last October in your county!

We hope that the local beekeeping family will encourage others to consider this also as a healthy and worthwhile hobby contributing to biodiversity and sustainability. We look forward to seeing the results of your revised flora and fauna survey working with the school on this project.

Under the tidiness section you mention the spraying of weeds. We hope that you will in the future consider manual weeding and non-chemical methods of weed control. Talk to your local authority Heritage Officer and Biodiversity Officer for advice in this area. We are under the impression from another entry that we received that your local authority is about to ban the use of chemical weeding in the county. We are sure that if this is the case there will be an education programme/advisory programme ensuing.

We are interested to know what advice has been obtained in relation to the Abbey floodlighting - e.g. effect on biodiversity? However - as the floodlighting has been in place for some years we expect that any adverse effects have already happened.

We observed - what appeared to be some hedge cutting of fairly recent origin on the Ballinamore approach. Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming bordering non cultivated land - you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Before trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. Birdwatch Ireland has helpful information in this regard also. As we write a new Bill has come before the Dáil in relation to extending the period of hedge cutting.

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

Your art project is probably one of the best projects under this category heading that this adjudicator has come across. It is most imaginative and enjoyable. In fact the adjudicator found it hard to tear themselves away from detailed enjoyment of each and every item along the fence. So instead we photographed almost all the signs to enjoy at our leisure in the future! And as we write the colourful photographs remind us of what an unusual and uplifting project this was! We just wonder what the long-term 'wear and tear' aspects are. It would be a shame if this project deteriorated through adverse weather. We do not think you will have any vandalism issues. And it would be a shame we think to take this project indoors at another level. What are your plans?

Your new water butt at the Visitor Centre will be useful in any event - but all the more so if we have very many more

summers like this one. You plan to have another one on Kesh Road.

We note your recent projects that provided LED bulbs for Christmas lighting and for the floodlighting at the Abbey.

We note (having looked at your social media pages) that you continue to promote green issues and initiatives on such pages. We are glad to see that you are endeavouring to reduce the amount of paper usage and to get people to use your social media sites to see good advice on this topic.

We are glad to see that you are promoting the use of reusable cups and jute bags at the Visitor Centre. You are also recycling batteries and using the Bring Banks to full effect. You see the creation of the new footpath as a way to connect with the Cavan and Leitrim Greenway.

To further advance in this category - as you are anxious to do - the Tidy Towns Handbook will help you to come up with new ideas. There is advice available on the Tidy Towns website. There is also a local waste prevention website - which you can link to from the Tidy Towns website. We would recommend that you keep in touch with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority also and attend relevant workshops/ seminars.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The overall impression of your village is one of tidiness, and we understand that this must be a considerable challenge - considering the extent of your village in four different directions. Your monthly litter cleanups are showing good results. Well done on participating in An Taisce spring clean-up campaign. Well done also to the Green School committee who get involved in litter picking and clean-ups. You keep up to date with the removal of random signs that are erected in your area. You keep weeds at bay. You also wash signs around the village.

And although you mention the CCTV signage installed on the Ballinamore road by your local authority under Residential etc. We credit it here.

Your Bring Banks were pristine in their presentation. It is obvious that you regularly wash the receptacles. This is one place where we feel you could add additional colour in the form of perhaps some planting behind the receptacles to frame them in the area into which the receptacles are set.

The 'children's indoor play area and café' signage across from the Visitor Centre detracted a little from the lovely gravelled shrubbery and the neatly grassed area on which the sign is located. It also 'competes' with the road sign above. A piece of wood was 'left behind' the small utility box nearby.

The telephone box needs a repaint.

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

There is an obvious pride in the village in how people present their properties to each other and to the wider world. We were very impressed with the neatness of the buildings themselves and the presentation of associated gardens. You are partly responsible for this good standard as you encourage residents to keep their homes and gardens in good shape. Thank you for the 'before' and 'after' photographs of the old cottage along the Carrick on Shannon road. You made a remarkable improvement here. After our visit we read on your Facebook page that a milk churn had been stolen at this location. We hope that the culprit feels guilty and returns the churn to your cottage.

Well done on the upgrade to the house on the approach to the village where you organised for the old scaffolding to be removed. You also continue to work with developers to keep unfinished development as tidy as possible.

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

The Mohill approach is a lovely leafy approach to your village. The signage is clean and attractive. The approaches are weed free. Is the Peace Garden going to be accessed only by pedestrians? There is no nearby car parking space - nor indeed car turning/parking space within the grounds. And we feel that it would be a pity to further 'eat into' the historic curtilage to provide parking. Can adjacent parking to serve the Abbey, the Church and Peace Garden be found? The car exit by the traditional gates -which need to be conserved - appears quite dangerous to this adjudicator.

On the Ballinamore/Carrick on Shannon approach we liked the good stone walling and the general neatness of the approach. We mentioned the hedge cutting of - what appeared to be fairly recent origin here under Wildlife above. Three religious posters were neatly placed together. But the highlight of this approach was the display of artwork concerning Irish mythology on recycled objects. This also have the additional effect of brightening up the fencing atop the stone wall. The colours were uplifting. The background to the twenty two large pieces of work is explained on a classically simple Tidy Towns poster.

It would be good if the field gates close to the Lough Reane fingerpost sign could be painted. In fact if all field gates in the village and on its approaches could be painted in a uniform colour - this would give a sense of identity to the village.

One of your major projects this year was to successfully present a proposal to your local authority for a new footpath on the Ballinamore approach road giving safe access to the village.

We have mentioned your picket fence at the Fenagh junction and planting of wildflowers under the Landscaping category. We liked the flowers underneath the sign on the Ballinamore approach road and we noted your planters along this road also.

You cut the grass along the approach roads and “sweep the leaves off the roads and streets.” Remember always to leave a wildlife corridor inside the trimmed areas. You keep signs along the approaches clean and you control weeds on the said approaches. You have had signs replaced and have replaced any needy planters including yearly repainting of existing planters. Your regular litter patrols on all approach roads show good results. In the future you hope to carry out work on the Cloone approach road to make it “more appealing.”

It is great to hear that you have been successful in relation to the new footpath from the village to the Aghoo road junction which leads to the canal bank walk

Concluding Remarks:

We are glad to see that you were delighted with your five-point increase last year, and as you can see you have beaten your own record this year! We feel that this is deserved. We wish you continued success this year and into the future. Go n-éirí libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!