

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Inistioge - Inis Tíog** Ref: **394**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **340**
Category: **B** Date(s): **21/06/2019**
04/08/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	60	44	46
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	49	51
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	41	42
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	22	23
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
TOTAL MARK	470	332	340

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Inistioge (Inis Tíog) páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachmhara 2019. We welcome you Inistioge to the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2019. Thank you for your wish that we would enjoy our visit to Inistioge. We certainly did enjoy our visit and we were very fortunate with a lovely sunny day for our visit. We hope that your adjudication report this year will also be “an important encouragement of efforts made and especially as a guide to improving” your “work” as you have said it has done in previous years. May we congratulate you on your achievements during the last 12 months and in particular on your receiving a Silver medal in last year's competition and also for your gold medal in the Entente Florale competition. We can see what that has meant to you as a community. It is good to know that you feel you have been doubly blessed by the legacy of the Entente Florale competition success - because it has given you a closer bonding and integration with the whole community.

For such a successful village you have a very small committee -but quite obviously a very well functioning committee. Without your 40 or so volunteers you would not be able to achieve as much as you do. We notice that this number includes those who got involved during the past year in preparations for Entente Florale and remained on with you. You say that the increase in volunteers is 90% on the 2017 figures. By any standards this is a remarkable achievement.

During the active months of the spring, summer, and autumn you hold monthly meetings which are cut back to bi-monthly meetings during the winter. Importantly you also meet weekly every Saturday during the busy periods to implement your work schedule. Some extra volunteers come along on a Monday evening also.

Your list of agencies, bodies and businesses that have supported you is extensive. And it is appropriate that your local authority is your most significant work partner. You credit them with expert care “without which care for your sensitive environment would be impossible”. Your list encompasses public bodies, sports bodies, local businesses, your Community Council, schools, and youth groups.

Your communication methods are both traditional and modern. You say that your website and your Facebook page attract new residents as well as keeping existing residents informed and up-to-date. On viewing your Facebook page recently we did feel that it would benefit from more regular content. You mention the parish newsletter. We hope that you circulate all denominational churches in your area. You have the help of the local businesses in advertising events also. You use group texting and WhatsApp as they are environmentally friendly. You make an important point in saying that your meetings are open to all and in particular that your officers are good listeners.

You engage with schools and involve the children's parents in various activities such as the dawn chorus and wildlife talks. Your transition year students get involved with your Christmas market. Your primary school got involved in the Entente Florale competition and indeed its adjudicators visited the school. Having an ecologist help them with their planting programmes ensures that they will know how to do things properly. GAISCE participants are supported by you.

By far and away the most important project for effort involved in the last 12 months was the huge work and consequent success in the Entente Florale competition. You freely admit the extra endeavour that is - and will be needed to maintain the additional standards you set for yourself through your work in entering this competition. Your Christmas market was both a "magical community event" and a financial success for yourselves and stallholders. Your calendar is a delight and involves people looking at their environment and capturing its essence to submit for photographic consideration and inclusion. We are delighted that you are including the schoolchildren for inclusion this year. It is also a great fundraiser.

Is iontach an rúde go mbíonn Club Comhrá agaibh agus suim agaibh inar teanga dúchais. Much of our heritage can be best understood by having knowledge of our native language. This applies both to the natural and built environment.

Your fundraising activities are many. Well done to your Post Office for its sponsorship and its display of your posters. You have a generous community who donate without being asked. Groups and societies such as the ICA all contribute. And how often did people see the Dunnes Stores Christmas advertisement and not know where the lovely village was?

Another project which happened during the year was the flood lighting of your bridge for charity.

We are amazed at your 56 years of Tidy Towns involvement. This is certainly impressive and means that you have been in the competition for almost all the years of its existence. We agree that your village retains its old world charm, but is nonetheless progressing in a good manner in the physical and built environment. Your involvement in Heritage Week is important and all in all your projects help to bring residents and business people together to a common goal, involves new residents - and as you say yourselves above all fosters a sense of community. You name six main areas where you see your groups work contributing to the development of your community. Each of these are different but equally important and span many aspects of your community and environment. Well done on all your awards and we enjoyed seeing them displayed proudly in the unused but meticulously clean and well-presented grey and white shop front on the village green.

Thank you for your very colourful and well presented entry form and general presentation. Your Entente Florale portfolio impressed - as did your lovely adjudication guide. The quality of these publications is something to be really proud of. Well done to those who supported you in funding these publications. Having gratitude as a quality is nowadays considered to be one of the best ways to be happy, and is interesting to see your October letter to the Chief Executive of your local authority on behalf of all the volunteers thanking the local authority and all its staff further for their input into your entry and eventual success. The project 'discovering stories' and your 'heritage trail' are also fantastic publications. There is so much material in your appendix that impresses. Thank you for your very informative and clear map and for your development / action plan which is also informative and clear. Your appendices were very interesting and supported your entry form. Well done on supplying these separately and not cluttering your entry form with information that was relevant but not critical to the form. Well done on impressing the Entente Florale adjudicators with your network of community workers which was indicative of the Tidy Towns network nationally.

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

Firstly let us say that we are delighted that you have undertaken to develop a public realm plan with funding received under the excellent Town and Village Renewal scheme. (We would have liked to have seen the entire Shaffrey Associates document - a practice that was one of the first in this country to create awareness of - and to encourage the care of the vernacular architecture of towns and villages in this country). You have approached this in a professional manner with your local authority. We hope that all disciplines in your local authority will be involved in their area of expertise in carrying out the plan. You have a lot to consider apropos of your designations as a National Monument and also as a village full of Protected Structures.

Inistioge is a typical estate village with its village green. That layout has been protected - but over and above this the owners of all the properties in the village are to be highly commended for the presentation of each and every one of the buildings forming this architectural unit. There was hardly one property that could be faulted on the day - public or private. That is quite an achievement. Furthermore you have undertaken to endeavour to conserve the Castle with the assistance of your County Architectural Conservation Officer. Well done on this project also. It is a pity however to think that the omnipresence of the car - both travelling speedily through your village and parked at every available angle - detracts from this visual impact. We have suggested signposting the car park on all sides of the village to encourage people to use it, and also we have suggested providing additional car parking. It would be lovely to see the village green visually intact without the interference of 'parked car after parked car after parked car'! One property that looks as though it needs a new owner fairly quickly is the white and black building on the corner of the Green / River Park Road. We hope that it will acquire a new owner during the coming 12 months. Perhaps they might also remove the satellite dish thereon.

We have already commented on your interest in Irish, and this is to be seen within the village - for example at the simple classical signage stone at the entrance to the GAA pitch - An Róbhar / Inistéog, and the naming of your community hall as Cois Abhainn is also lauded. Although the flora and fauna sign at the entrance to the Poynz Road (you spell it 'Points' but this sign says 'Poynz' Road) appears to be an older sign - as does your nature sign near the underpass of the bridge in the riverside park - you had the foresight to have this sign designed with bilingual identifications. This shows an ongoing interest in the language which we hope will continue into the future.

On entering the village from the Thomas town side one comes across the lovely stone building beside the Church of Ireland. We noticed that the building is for sale, and we sincerely hope that the new owners continue to maintain its good presentation.

The community building Cois Abhainn very well presented.

The Church of Ireland with its excellent stone wall boundaries, and its well maintained main structure impressed. Its neighbour, the Catholic Church, was equally well presented. Well done on your conservation work on traditional stonework. Such conservation work included work on bollards such as those surrounding the village green.

The premises Woodstock Arms is a very big premises to maintain so well. On the day a wedding was taking place in one of the churches and a lot of the guests were enjoying the summer sunshine outside this premises in the large area which had been provided with tables, chairs, and restrained classical umbrellas (without common advertising). The 'picture' looked very well and it was a source of envy to the adjudicator that they could not join this party, but had to continue their adjudication!

O' Donnell's public house retains a traditional shop front. Its upper stories retain traditional sash windows at the second floor level. It was painted freshly with the quoin stones outlined in a deeper colour. Personally this adjudicator would have reservations about the insertion of hanging baskets on such a lovely traditional architecturally unspoilt elevation. We feel that its architectural value stands alone and does not need embellishment. Moreover inserting hanging baskets into structures of architectural merit - whether they be protected or not - can damage the fabric of the structure. And watering hanging baskets can also cause damage to window timbers. Adjacent properties were admired also. We failed to read the plaque above the brown hall door with traditional door details. We were intrigued by the little we could make out. Once again you are to be commended for conserving such items in pristine surrounds.

The properties along High Street are also exceptionally well presented. The rising road adds to their visual interest with the 'end stop' three-storey three-bay house painted in a delightful cream/mushroom palette forming an 'end stop' of significance at the top of the stretch of road from the Millennium Garden to the Mill Road junction. Yet again on the day this scene was somewhat compromised by lines of cars on both sides. The beer-advertising hanging banner on one of these properties probably would be better replaced by something less obtrusive.

The W. Walsh property beside the old castle was well presented, although its traditional windows appear to have been replaced with uPVC inserts. Nonetheless the old shop front has been conserved. Our comments in relation to hanging baskets and the damage they can cause to such architectural gems apply here also.

On the Green itself beside the old church we admired the P. Hogan property, and applaud you for your upgrading of the adjacent old Methodist church through the restoration of the traditional lime render. The gate between these two properties is a nice traditional pedestrian type gates. Viewing of these properties from the Green was through lines of parked cars on the Green edges.

With regard to accessibility you need to be a little careful. For instance whereas the Ashe property is beautifully presented the planted tubs outside the door would impede wheelchairs and buggies etc. on the adjacent footpath. On adjudication day a small car was parked directly in front of one of the access/exit spaces from the Green onto the street. Moreover these exit /entry spaces provide access onto a very busy road without any arrangement for safety of crossing. It was noted that a buggy is available for people with walking issues or for the elderly to take them from the car park at Woodstock to the tearooms. In this regard we would also recommend that you ask your local authority if they could display the distance to the tea rooms on the tearooms signs. It involves a long trek! We would suggest that perhaps you consider asking your local authority also to provide picnic tables which have a 'gaps' area in the seating to provide for wheelchair access to the table. You will find examples of these in catalogues and on the web.

The public toilets in the village were neatly presented and it was good to see all the facilities - including the disability facilities available - open on the day. If you are ever improving or upgrading your public toilets do take note of the international movement towards Changing Places toilet facilities. You will find details on both a web page and a Facebook page. (Your hurling rivals' local authority in the adjacent county became the first local authority in Ireland to provide such facilities at the national archaeology park). Nearby - one very rarely sees utility substations presented in as good a fashion as yours was. The stone building fitted into the surrounds very well and was meticulously maintained.

Be careful of the insertion of satellite dishes onto the frontages of buildings. This can interfere with the streetscape visually and such insertions on the front elevations of buildings require planning permission.

Your fine bridge is indeed one of your architectural gems. Viewing it from the Riverside Park and from many other

angles was delightful. Viewing it from the footpath on the opposite side of the road - once again car parking interfered with this view. Even relatively hidden parts of your street furniture were well maintained - including the lovely heavy cast iron chains along the mill stream. Chains on the village green and internally on the green are also kept in good order, together with their stone bollards.

The ornate fountain on the village Green is a focal point and is conserved well. Perhaps you could get its waterspouts in working order again as you suggest in your entry. You also hope to have specialist cleaning of monuments. Your County Conservation Office will advise you well on this. We also admired the other stone monument maintained carefully in its paved setting on the Green. Your work on the Castle is incremental, and you are well advised by the County Architectural Conservation Officer in this regard. You have also obtained archaeological advice. It is much better to proceed slowly as limited funding becomes available, and to phase this project and other projects like it - as funds arise. You have long-term plans for this building including a possible heritage centre. The remedial stone work has been completed successfully at the bridge also. We admired your new small landscaped area with picnic tables at the boat slip. Well done on the work you have carried out at the boat slip area. This area is used by anglers and picnickers. The wildflower areas (surrounding the picnic areas of grass) were mowed nearer the picnic areas - to allow for access thereto.

In Woodstock we marvelled at the great conservation of the metal gates etc. Whereas this is in overall context an Arboretum - the built heritage items have been carefully considered also. The walled garden walls have been carefully conserved and form a delightful feature which remains intact. The ornate gates into the walled garden are exceptionally beautiful. The most unusual seating with the swan 'ends' has been conserved. Likewise the new signage is discreet, informative and attractive. Well done to Kilkenny County Council. The house itself is still gaunt and atmospheric. We commend your local authority for the sensitive way in which they have brought this estate back to life, but have retained its atmosphere and mystique.

The environs and approach to St Columcille's Well were delightful. The sensitive simple black and white directional sign looked well. And we commend the property owners on this approach for their property maintenance - houses and gardens. We admired traditional gate pillars and gate in this area.

We concur with the opinion of the adjudicators of the Entente Florale who were impressed with the fact that "there were no big signs around the village," and in this way you have enabled the character of the village to be retained.

We wondered what your plans are - if any - for St Columcille's Band Preservation Hall? The windows had been blocked-in and painted. Perhaps this paint might be freshened? Stonewalls are a feature of your traditional landscape and you have been careful to retain this part of your built heritage - for instance in the newer built stone walls near the stone seating at your riverside park.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The village Green is the centrepiece of your landscaping, but on the day it was 'framed' by car parking in almost every possible available spot - both on and off the main through road. We cannot comment as to how common or uncommon an occurrence this is - due to the fact that there was a wedding taking place in one of the churches on our visit. This is a great pity, as the landscape feature of the Green is intact, and needs to be viewed in its entirety undisturbed by distractions such as cars. The mature trees on the Green are delightful. Have you considered replanting appropriate parts of the Green - as there is a life span for every tree? Perhaps some additional (to those already planted) semi-mature plantings in the park might also be considered - to be ready for any tree 'demises' that might happen. We noticed that some of the semi mature planting near the Caum or Millstream area were not thriving (close to the leaf compost site).

You have been busy working on this category due to your enthusiasm and also your preparation for your Entente Florale competition. You are also supporting the National Pollinator PI, and you have a blueprint in the form of a professional specific pollinator plan for your village. Good luck with your entry in the pollinator plan award. Well done on your additional perennial pollinator-friendly planting. Thank you for your photographs. Planting has taken place at various points throughout the village.

Your community garden is in its third year and contains both raised beds and a poly tunnel. This is a great incubator for plants and for people in the village to learn about plant life and growing food for home consumption. We congratulate the community employment workers and volunteers who come together to share their knowledge. Likewise the community herb garden benefits all residents. The Mens' Shed is to be commended for their input in providing materials.

The village benefits from a wonderful treed background as viewed from ground level near the bridge. You are blessed with wonderful mature trees around the village and in particular within its boundaries. The tranquillity of the river with its lapping noise and the accompanying birdsong one experiences when visiting your River Park is soporific. The semi-manicured nature of the park contrasts nicely with the wild untamed opposite bank of the river. We commend you for the upkeep of this park which allows the visitor to rest awhile away from the traffic frenzy, and gives opportunity for picnics on the old - but very well-maintained benches and seats. You have not tried to overfill the park with plantings and the classical simplicity of its stone- surrounded - and other beds - appeals. We note your perennial and pollinator friendly planting here too. We read the notice board here with interest. Views back to the terrace of houses/café across the road looked very well - in large part due to their excellent upkeep. We found a

lovely traditional - but somewhat unusual farm gate at the side of the park, but it was fairly well overgrown, and we would suggest that you clear this space to reveal its beauty. We loved the curved path that leads to the archway under the bridge where one can traverse to the far side of the bridge. This gives a great opportunity for the visitor to see the wonderful stonework of your ancestral stonemasons.

We admired the semi-mature trees planted along the perimeter of the new car park, and some colourful poppies were noted, and also all the other associated plantings. The very colourful planting bed on the village side of the new car park looked really well.

The small two-tiered planter beside the Tullagher/Woodstock Park signage was simple and effective. On the day a berry sales was taking place from a small temporary booth nearby, and there were a lot of cars parked in the immediate vicinity. So its effect was minimised somewhat. The planter beside the Kilkenny signpost was simple in its presentation - but very effective.

The stone wall which has been plastered in places - but has lost some of its plaster on Points Road has a magnificent display of boot planting. This was a most artistic endeavour. Quite often one sees a boot or two boots planted, but we had never seen a planting display like this involving footwear. We were left a little puzzled as to whether the boots needed some additional plantings or were they meant to be as they were? A photograph (amongst many others) we took on the day of a section of these boots surrounded by pale pink climbing roses must surely be a competitor for any photographic competition. Generally we would encourage you not to use composite planting pots but tried to use - for example stone or terracotta planters where relevant. One delightful example of a very prettily planted stone container was seen close to the Mill Stream. We would definitely not recommend the use of tyres for planting, as seen beside your composting area. Tyres are not an appropriate visual accompaniment to such a beautiful space. Moreover there is national guidance now on the recycling of tyres which should be adhered to. The toadstool wooden seating near the composting area must be attractive to small children.

Well done on your work at the herb garden, and at the school raised beds, and your hellebores at the Entente Florale installation area. We would have liked to follow the inviting path of Trail Kilkenny into the countryside on the day. It is however a great addition to your village to have people come through on this trail. The playing pitches between the school and the riverside are taking advantage of the flat alluvial land, and we complement the sports authorities for not 'festooning' signage along the perimeter.

The access to St. Columcille's Well is found across the small stream and upwards via steps and is delightfully landscaped. Part of this effect is due to the private owner of the garden through which it seems part of the path traverses. Well done to the O'Brien's - whom you acknowledge for this in your entry! As one rose upwards the landscaping became more natural and rural and this was a nice contrast. We noticed your pollinator areas, and admired the lovely stone wall against which the sign was set. It was lovely to see white foxgloves amongst the colourful displays. We wished we had more time to sit and ponder life generally on the lovely stone seating on the approach to the well. Sea pinks were surprisingly found also atop the stone wall. By the sea or here they are lovely flowers and bring back happy memories of seaside holidays!

It is good to see that the boat slip area has lifeguards on duty during the busy summer season so that people can enjoy this wonderful area and amenity. The wooded riverbank across from the slip looked majestic.

The hedging overhanging the Church of Ireland stone wall was admired, and the more formally planted small plot between both churches and beside the entrance gates of the church of Ireland looked very well. Colour always looks well against stonework, and the blue sky behind on the day added to this lovely picture.

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

Well done again on your entry to the all-Ireland Pollinator Plan. You are very aware of your special village assets - in both in the built environment and here in the natural environment - reminding us that Inistioge lies within an Area of conservation. The mixed woodland and the river are also sites full of biodiversity. Moreover the floodplain on the river is a Natural Heritage area. Thank you for the list of pollinator friendly plants which you are busily planting on an ongoing basis. You are guided by your Biodiversity master plan. Well done to the primary school which has developed the school biodiversity plan advised by your Biodiversity Officer and your Environmental Awareness Officer - with the assistance of the Council Heritage officer. This plan came into action in March 2018. The activity also encourages students to grow their own food. Thank you for the photographs of these projects. We note that the Entente Florale judges saw all those projects on their visit.

The fact that you have left the existing stone wall and its inherent vegetation intact along the road frontage of the car park looks visually pleasing, but also allows for the habitats to remain undisturbed. As one approaches the village along the footpath from the car park there is a series of planters defining the inner edge of the footpath. Some of these contain evergreen non-deciduous plantings. Perhaps you could look at replacing these in the future with pollinator friendly perennials. In fact a more satisfactory landscaping/ planting plan might be looked at for this open hard surfaced area.

We imagine that the tower of the Church of Ireland is home to bats and other avian creatures? Have you had any sightings or surveys?

We appreciate the fact that the Poyntz/ Points Road is under reconstruction at present, and perhaps it is your

intention to renew the flora and fauna sign of the points road when this work is complete. This sign is located near to the O'Donnell public house. The sign has become a little faded.

The Woodstock Loop walks signage near O' Donnell's public house straddles the contrast between planned village street furniture and more rural street furniture in its wooden framed surrounds. As the Points Road was closed to pedestrians on our visit we did not make this loop walk. However we came on part of it when we visited Woodstock later. The South Leinster way signage close to the back entrance to the Woodstock estate on the Points Road would probably need a freshening up after the road works which are taking place close by.

We admired your stone seating and your birdhouse/table in the riverside park

In Woodstock as we exited the car park we took note of the wildlife poster and would suggest that in due course perhaps it could be replaced with a poster which names the wildlife in Irish as well.

At the boat slip area we saw three notices appended to trees. Two of these were directed at anglers. It is bad practice to attach notices to living trees.

We would ask you to remove the notices that are attached to the mature trees with the permission of the people who erected these notices, and try between you both to provide freestanding notices.

The area around St Columcille's Well - as you say has been designated as a specific wildlife pollinator friendly environment - following advice from an ecologist. We liked your idea about the area being sacred and how that connects with responsibilities to creation.

The grove restoration has been successful and is a good example of how native species can replace non-native species and thrive. Despite the fact that your graveyards proved a challenge you have come up with an answer. As we all know graveyards are rich in biodiversity. We were delighted to see that you are working with local beekeepers. It was difficult to see the exact location of the beehives which have been sited on the far side of the river, but we think we spotted them. Well done on this initiative once again. The Men's Shed came to the rescue with the made-up beehive.

You are working diligently on the issue of invasive species and as you say the work continues each year. You are spreading the word about an all-encompassing plan for the Nore Valley in relation to this issue. We were glad to see the sign on the Japanese knot weed site at Hatchery Lane, and also glad to see that it was bilingual.

Your dawn chorus must be a wonderful morning. We would have liked to have been there. Well done to those people who participated in the garden bird survey. We would encourage you to perhaps look at the whole area of fauna and bird populations in a little bit more detail in your area. You have given huge attention to the subject of plants over the last few years. Your local authority Biodiversity Officer and your Heritage officer will be able to encourage you in this regard. We are sure that there is a lot of information freely available to you from the official sites concerning the SACs and NHAs. Nonetheless there is something very rewarding about conducting your own surveys and in this way you become more intimately acquainted with your natural surrounds and fauna.

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

Your new lighting for the village was completed around the time of your adjudication last year so we saw the project as really mostly a project that took place for last year's adjudication. Nonetheless the saving in energy that the lighting causes means that throughout this year's adjudication period the LED lighting has delivered a large energy use reduction. Once again your 'before' and 'after' photographs are useful.

Your 'tireless' Green Officer and Chairperson work with the local authority and the Three Counties Energy Agency. Energy auditing identifies energy-saving opportunities. As a result of initial surveys your heating controls management system for your community centre at Cois Abhainn has been implemented. Again you show a professional approach to your projects.

Whereas recycling is at the lower end of the sustainable waste minimisation pyramid it is still important, and we note your very many recycling efforts. Your weaving and art galleries are very self-sufficient and mean that many gifts that would otherwise need to be travelled for can be purchased locally - and in so doing the community can promote such ventures into the future. Your education with regard to vegetable and fruit growing promotes the idea of reducing transport energy usage on food. Children are learning very quickly from your good example.

The community composting project is being assisted by the master composting course delivered by the EPA. It will be quite an achievement to have the first master composting site in Kilkenny, and we look forward to details of its progress and statistics on how exactly it has changed things in the village. We visited your lovely treed area by the Caum or Millstream where you have your composting area and saw your clearly signed leaf mould signage (This sign was a little grubby). The childrens' toadstool seating referred to already was presumably recycled wood from your village.

Water harvesting takes place at a community centre and at the community garden and you use this for power washing pavements as well as for watering plants. This is good.

We note your use of solar panels in your community centre and we commend highly your weed control by natural hoeing methods.

Your potential to move forward in sustainable practices is great, and it can also deliver you extra marks in this competition. We appreciate the fact that you have been concentrating over the last while on streetscape, landscaping, planting and planting biodiversity in your village. It is difficult to concentrate on every category annually. Perhaps next year you can get together with your local authority Environmental Awareness Officer - who will - no doubt - will be very helpful to you in suggesting ways to become more sustainable. The Tidy Towns Handbook will also help you to come up with ideas and the local waste prevention website - which you can link to from the Tidy Towns website is also a good source for new ideas. You have a number of future projects planned to advance the entire issue of sustainability. But could these be expanded? Could perhaps the businesses in your village get together and carry out an audit to see what improvements they can make. It is important to carry out audits in any area of sustainability so that improvements can be measured.

You do not seem to have not mentioned the Green Schools programme here with regard to biodiversity, and we remember seeing a Green Flag flying at the school. Perhaps you can work with the schoolchildren as they hopefully progress to obtain further flags? The knowledge that the children acquire through this program is vast, and they can share this knowledge and advice willingly.

Emphasis on recycling/reuse and segregation is good – but to get to the kernel of this issue we must find ways to prevent the production of waste in the first case.. How many - if any - houses participate in the Green Homes scheme? Perhaps next year you may be able to attend some information sessions on this topic?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village is manicured; in its tidiness and no litter was evident. We were impressed with the cleanliness of the footpath from the new car park and school into the village. Not one weed was visible and this creates a good first impression on the visitor. We were impressed with the cleanliness of the street and road signage throughout. Sometimes gable ends are overlooked and can create a poor impression. The contrary was true as one approaches from the Thomastown direction - when one is 'hit' by the resplendent white gable facing one beyond the car park. We note that this property is for sale. Very often when properties go on the market their maintenance dips. Well done to the vendors for maintaining its pristine presentation on all visible elevations. The Cois Abhainn building adjacent complements this enclave. Seating outside O' Donnell's public house was clean and well presented. We noticed your restrained and clean litter related sign at the entrance to the Riverside Park. Despite the crowds around on adjudication day litter was absent apart from a few pieces in the gravel at the utility substation beside the public toilets.

The Department of Rural and Community Development have invested a large sum in upgrading paths and trails in the Points Road area. The new railing at the entrance to the boat slip was also noted and is commended.

We are glad to see that the railing at the riverside of the GAA pitch has been attended to as suggested by last year's adjudicator.

Well done on the presentation of pavements, unoccupied houses, and signage which you work hard to maintain. Your reseeding of the Green edges looks well.

Litter picks occur on a weekly basis and are supported by the Beavers. Children are introduced at an early age to the idea of litter segregation. We are surprised that you 'get away' with a weekly litter pick. Certainly the only piece of litter we saw was in the utility building gravelled area beside the public toilets. Spring Cleans have approximately a dozen adult volunteers. You segregate your litter and undertake litter management for all major events locally. The roadside litter campaign initiative with the sister counties publicises the need for an awareness of roadside litter. Dog poo awareness is as you say a perennial project and you are working on this annually. You look forward to the completion of a new water supply. We perfectly understand your situation via the roadworks.

However at your level in the competition detail becomes important, so we draw your attention to a few issues:-

Some dead trees beyond St, Columille's Well on a nearby bank needed removal.

We observed a lot of wires at the Mill Road junction with the Woodstock Road on a large pole. At the Thomas town approach side of the Church of Ireland just by the stone wall and at the commencement of the overhanging hedge we noticed a public light standard that had a lot of wires attached. Would it be possible to rationalise this cabling?

A redundant empty projecting sign frame near the Mermaid Gallery was noted.

We felt that the Post Office/shop had too many signs on its elevation facing the approach from Thomastown - as well as on its front elevation. Perhaps you could work with the owners to see in what other way their shop could be made known to the person travelling from the Thomastown direction. We understand that the traveller comes on this shop suddenly, and may bypass it if they are not made aware of its existence. The preponderance of advertising on this very well otherwise maintained building – both on the gable and front elevation is a pity, as the elevation would look most striking if the advertising was rationalised.. There was quite an amount of clutter outside the shop also. We know that the Post Office/shop owners are very involved with your work and support you in every way. Perhaps some controlled notice board type advertising signage might be erected in the adjacent carpark? This might also alleviate the issue of cars trying to park and reverse out onto the busy road when using the post office/shop, as the frontage available is very small and does not provide great visibility on exit from the small pull-in area.

A small amount of the paved narrow pathway beyond the bridge in the Riverside Park is cracked. We notice that you have already carried out repairs, as you have shown us your 'before' and 'after' photographs in your entry. No doubt you will get to finish this work in due course. The grass on either side of this area also needs a little reseeding.

We must complement the house owners of your village and particularly those with houses visible on many sides – for instance the cream and terracotta coloured house on the approach to the Green from the public toilets/mainstream area, and again the brightly painted white house on the corner as one arrives from that area into the village green.

As one approaches the car park from the village we felt that some improvement could be made to the wall and field gate on the village side of the car park. On the left one sees the lovely raised stone bed with its perennial shrub planting but the remainder of the view includes a wall with plaster falling off and an unpainted gate.

As regards the Bring Banks the one on Mill Road was clean and tidy - if a little stark in its presentation. This is a rather open site for a bring bank. The second confused us, as the area indicated on your map contained two very large blue refuse bins, a grey bin, a frozen food abandoned container, and two steel containers on wheels - one of which contained old newspapers. The adjudicator would have thought that this amalgamation belonged to the adjacent shop. Is it also used by the public? And can it be screened? As it is fairly openly on view at present it looks quite untidy. We also noticed that there was a planning application on the adjacent wooden fence for holiday houses etc. If this goes ahead will this bring bank if it is already open to the public, be relocated? The date on the planning application had faded away so we do not know how current this proposed development is.

Some mown grass needed to be swept away from the surfaced path beside the semi mature trees near the car park. It would also be beneficial if the gates leading to this access to the sports pavilion be painted.

The container like structure at the boat slip area was well painted, but a little out of context in this area. There were two empty red and yellow poles adjacent - the use of which we did not understand.

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

The residents of your village are to be complimented on the excellent presentation of their houses. You are a lucky community to have such commitment. Even properties away from the main frequented areas looked well. Your estates were well maintained.

Whereas you carefully name the various estates on Mill Road on your map we noticed that there were no names physically on two of the estates on the ground visible as one approached on the approach road from either side either entering or leaving the village. The Orchard estate did have a name. We very much admired the lovely cottage with its sash traditional windows beside St. Columcille's Hall. The grass area and planting areas at Mill Road and Ard Aoibheann are maintained by your community employment Tidy Towns workers and by the residents themselves.

The Inistioge in Bloom awards for private gardens certainly has had an effect. Thank you for letting us have photographs and details of the three exceptional gardens of recent times, and well done to each of the award winners. The Entente Florale competition encouraged more interest in garden displays so it is a case of 'onwards and upwards.'

We admired the house on the Points Road with the wonderful bright yellow Georgian style door case and its fanlight. This lovely entrance door was set off by brightly shining white step elevations and pristine white railings, together with lots of colourful plantings. It is this sort of commitment to the detail of your built and natural heritage that brings you such acclaim.

Further along the Poyntz/Point Road we came upon another amazing planted display - that on the walls of a lovely dove-grey house - with its trained wall planting Even the small shed opposite this complemented the scene - with its brightly painted door, steps, and small scale planting and hanging basket. And so too did the single storey lateral extension with its matching bright door and planting, as did the garden across the way. This adjudicator would not use the composite planters in front of the single story extension but rather use the pot type in front of the house. We are not sure if the path here is public fronting this property or not. If so there would be an issue with accessibility movement. This was one of your winners in your private garden competition.

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

Thank you for your excellent photographs of the New Ross approach road showing how you manage and maintain such an approach. We agree that this is an excellent approach. You minimise interventions thereby keeping the character already established in the area.

As we approached the village from the Thomastown road the private garden opposite the beginning of your grass set back-was much admired. The long sward of grass - (the extent of which you have minimised this year in accordance with your pollinator plan) and wildflower meadow is a very nice introduction to Inistioge The crab apple trees which have been planted on the Thomastown road would need more space as to thrive. A circular area around the circumference of the trees might be cut from the meadow to give the trees breathing room and sustenance. We

wondered what the mound of earth was doing on the grass sward here. The road here looks newly surfaced and part looks unfinished. The rather faded bed and breakfast sign might be substituted for a fingerpost sign for the establishment or removed. It does not look well beside your lovely welcome sign and the well-designed advertising/directional sign for Woodstock. We stopped here for a short while and during this time we were very conscious of the birdsong and the scent of roses and other summer aromas from the various flowers. There are nice views over the adjacent countryside and down into the valley from this place. We admired the oak tree memorial to past members of your organisation. The delightful display of ox eye daisies surrounding your signage at the village end of this green area looked really well. The seating was well maintained.

With regard to your new car park we were somewhat surprised firstly that there was only one wheelchair parking space available, and secondly that this space was located at the far end of the car park away from the village. This does not make sense. The car park was minimally in use, although the village was chock-a-block with cars on the day. We think you need to give advance warning on all sides of the village of the availability of car parking space, as one may not be aware of its presence. We admired the timber framed fresh signage, but would suggest perhaps painting the field gate adjacent. We would also suggest that you paint the barrier at the far end of the car park. Along this approach as one reaches the school good clean footpaths are available connecting with the village proper. You have taken on board last year's adjudicators issue in relation to the footpath opposite the school which has now been resurfaced.

In any event we feel there is a real need for some additional parking on the New Ross approach /entry to service the Riverside Park and businesses at this end of the village. We realise that there is some un signposted and uncontrolled parking space available around the public toilets, but this is limited and not obvious to visitors. Parking on the lovely cobbled area near the Riverside Cafe detracted from that nice surface and buildings.

We were also quite shocked by the fact that there is no pedestrian crossing available throughout the village other than the crossing which obviously serves the needs of the schoolchildren. Whereas people exiting the car park could in theory use this crossing - the natural instinct would be to head off towards the village on the car park side. Perhaps some directional signage for pedestrians exiting the car park might be considered which would encourage them to use this pedestrian crossing. The speed at which the traffic from Kilkenny to New Ross passes through this village is frightening. Whereas speed bumps look ugly, and would interfere with your estate village visual integrity, we feel that something must be done to stem this fast flow. You deserve it! If even one pedestrian crossing was provided perhaps that might automatically slow traffic down - because at present traffic is obviously not keeping the speed limits. It would serve two purposes slowing traffic and providing safe pedestrian linkage within the village itself. The pedestrian is somewhat forgotten with the flow of through traffic through your village. It takes quite a long time to find a gap in the flowing traffic to cross the road at the Green and indeed to cross to the Riverside Park. We would strongly suggest a pedestrian crossing with lights to service the Riverside Park due to the existence of the blind corner to pedestrians on this busy road. We leave it to your traffic engineers to work out the best solution.

On the Woodstock approach the Woodstock Arms sign was bent, and once again the same B&B sign which appeared on the Thomastown Road was found repeated on this approach. This is a lovely treed downhill approach to the village looking down on the roofs of both churches and to the pastureland and hills beyond. An area outside Woodstock gates requires trimming on the right-hand side of this approach, as one descends from Woodstock. Equally just inside the gate of Woodstock some trimming is required. We noticed the bird box on the lands to our left. Wonderful views of your great bridge and river are to be seen also. We noticed the pollinator area as we approached nearer to the village. The lovely old stone walls on the left-hand side and the newer stone walls on the right-hand side - together with the mature trees on this approach looked very well. The 50 K pH road sign on the right-hand side was very clean but the 50 K pH sign on the left-hand side was obscured by vegetation. We noticed that the drinking fountain would benefit from conservation, and, as we arrived at the village we admired the lovely terraces of houses.

On the Mill Road approach we noticed that one speed limit sign had a striped upright and was a little rusty. The second speed limit sign did not have a striped upright. It would be good to coordinate these two signs.

As one exits from the St . Columille access road i.e. Hatchery Lane - the black and white road markings on the garden boundaries of the cottage and the adjacent house need repainting.

The surface and road markings on the New Ross road would benefit from an upgrade. The well planted bank at the signage on the new Ross side of the bridge was admired. Turning off for the boat slip from the New Ross road seemed somewhat dangerous as one left the village and somewhat difficult on exiting – particularly if one was heading in the New Ross direction. Perhaps some temporary solution in the form of mirrors or traffic calming/lights might be considered. An arrow on the bridge at the New Ross approach could be repainted. Directional signage and road signs throughout the village impressed in their exceptionally clean condition. It appears that you have a very vigilant and cooperative engineer in your area! Walking trail signs are similarly excellent throughout.

Concluding Remarks:

It was rather a long number of years since this adjudicator was taken to visit Woodstock by parents who were interested in history, literature and nature. So it was an interesting personal experience to go back and to see how Woodstock had been saved by your local authority, Coillte and yourselves. The adjudicator's memory of it as a child was of a magical place that stayed in the memory all those years. It was great to see that the same atmosphere has been preserved and that the restoration has been so sympathetically undertaken. We imagine children today would

feel the same way after a visit. Walking down the Monkey Puzzle Avenue just seemed like yesterday. New insertions such as the tea rooms and the playground have been included in the best possible manner without disturbing that aura. Well done to all concerned.

We loved the content of the signage on the Points Road looped walks signage which signed off on these words

“Inistigoe is quiet. It's beautiful. It has big stories to tell”

What more can one say? And well done to the author of this signage content!

We wish you every success in the years ahead and we look forward to another visit in the future where we can relax - and perhaps we can join the parties enjoying the sunshine and spend many more hours in your village and in Woodstock! We expect to hear more about you in the future in this competition and generally! Go n-eiri libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!

Note: this adjudicator would be happy for you to leave your farm implements as you have suggested in item 2 on page 8. Sometimes a lot of farm implements can look 'twee' - and as they are - they are unobtrusive enough. The second round adjudicator had issues with the possibility of them distracting the motorist. You might perhaps discuss this with your roads engineer and take their advice.

Second Round Adjudication:

Inishtigoe

Sunday 5 August 2019

Your first-round adjudicators have provided an exceptionally thorough review of your work and the presentation of Inishtigoe during their visit. All of which is agreed within this subsequent visit. It has been a great year for Inishtigoe for both working together as a community and for getting results. Congratulations and well done on your hard work. Not a wonder you won a 'gold' award at the Entente Florale. Trees, shrubs and landscaped beds were gorgeous as were the Community Gardens (viewed from the stairs at the Heritage Museum). Of particular note was how you incorporated pollinator-friendly planting in nearly every nook and cranny.

The School looked well and the raised beds and vegetables were nicely tended even in the Summer. It was felt that the safety railings at the school looked quite industrial. The new guidance from the Design Manual for Urban Roads a Villages (DMURS) does advise to remove these and integrate the space more. But with traffic levels, and the location of the school on the approach road, this might not be recommended. Can an off-road path be considered to the school in your long-term plan?

The 'shared-space' notice for Point Road highlighted the care needed on this lovely lane. The vegetable garden at the side of one house covered in Wisteria, and its traditional front-country garden full of hollyhocks opposite were lovely. The old-boots planting scheme looked great in their hey-day...

The border planting at the new GAA car park was lovely and helped to make this facility look as if it had been there for some time. It quickly filled up on a Sunday morning by Church attendees some of whom were happy to get as close as possible no matter what the implications! This adjudicator didn't mind being one of several cars at The Green blocked by cars during mass – we suspect it was a business ploy as we all spent more time and money enjoying Inishtigoe.

Clever use of planters stops poor parking on the bend outside the premises besides the community centre – the painted windows looked well here too. Nearby the bins at the shop should be relocated behind the screen provided. Galvanised utility boxes could be painted

Towards the top of high street, a water trough has a lot of duckweed possibly indicating high nutrient loads. The duckweed can be manually removed to enhance this feature. Fair play to the cyclists braving this hill!

As mentioned, the standard of residential (and all) properties was very high. Roisin's cottage caught the eye as did White's cottage. It is good that the leylandii has been cut back between Ard Aoibheann and The Orchard. What are the plans for the corner space in the higher estate - it would be a lovely playground? The signage at the bring-banks is quite large for this area. The lovely tradition of placing white stones (quartz?) on the top of the boundary walls was noticed through the village.

The public toilets were clean and a clever toilet paper dispenser provided. The smell of chemicals here was quite strong. Do you use eco-friendly cleaning products here? The toilets provide a good opportunity to provide visitors with information on eg. the importance of the river habitats and what they can do at home eg. Do not put oils etc down drains, or direct them to enjoy and help-themselves to your herb garden. Your Waters & Communities Officer may have some ideas to help you.

The new wooden fence railings at the boat slip looked well – though the Himalayan balsam here has quickly grown! Another target area for your bashing.

Two-way traffic and pedestrians on the main bridge over the river in Inistigoe make for interesting manoeuvres.

Could a pedestrian path be marked on the tarmac at one side of the bridge to help?

Woodstock was excellently managed and the signage helps highlight the importance of the habitats and species here which are designated of European Importance. One discrete bench provided gorgeous views through the woods to the Nore - this is excellently managed. The new walks around the village - Woodstock & Ladies Loop – were well-signposted and are a good example of how to enhance and encourage more to your wonderful community.