

Tidy Towns Competition 2021

Adjudication Report

Centre: Strokestown - Béal na mBuillí	Ref: 715
County: Roscommon	Mark: 278
Category: B	Date(s): 26/08/2021

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2021
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	36
Streetscape & Public Places	60	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	29
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33
TOTAL MARK	470	278

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

Fáilte Chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara Super Valu 2021. Táimid buíoch daoibh as ucht na hiontrála a chur chugainn. Go raibh maith agaibh as ucht bhur dtacaíocht le linn na paindéime.

Lean leis an dea-obair

Thank you for your completed online entry to the competition for 2021.

These are difficult times for any voluntary community groups and your involvement this year is much appreciated if in a different format.

The 2019 report referred to a 5 year plan and the inclusion of a map but neither were included in this entry form.

The adjudicator is pretty familiar with Strokestown and was able to obtain the layout of the town from an online version of the map.

Of course Strokestown is very historical town and it's a pity that this wasn't outlined more in the entry form with more about the Famine Museum and local blacksmith and inventor Peter Hayden.

The committee numbers are small considering the size of Strokestown but one assumes that you have interaction with the Strokestown Development Association and Strokestown Town Team both of which have an informative online presence.

The objective of the Town Team back in 2017 when it was formed was to help the Town recover from the impact of the economic recession.

With the advent of Covid its existence is even more important from now on.

The adjudicator would urge the Committee to become more interlinked to the two local bodies mentioned and have a more combined approach to formulating next's year's entry form and it was noted that back in 2019 there was a description of a better interaction with these bodies and indeed with Roscommon County Council in the report of that year.

For instance you mention in this submission that unoccupied and near derelict properties are an issue then a cohesive a preach with your other partners would be the best way to tackle such issues.

Schools involvement is an important part of any Tidy Towns Groups and it is good to note that you have that on your list as a priority.

The methods of communication as per the entry form are the old reliable such as newsletter and parish notices but it some engagement by way of the main social media platforms would be worthwhile considering.

31 years is a long association with the competition and this association is very much appreciated by the Tidy Towns Unit.

At this juncture the adjudicator would like to introduce the SDG Act Local & Think Global Programme, 17 goals in all, as follows.

The Sustainable Development Goals are at the heart of the United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

These goals address the global challenges we face, including poverty, inequality, climate change and other key environmental issues. In 2021, Tidy Towns has adopted these goals and has integrated these into the competition which now asks participating groups to demonstrate which goals their projects and actions help to meet.

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

Well done on being involved in the restoration of an original P& T Phone Box which was kindly donated by someone with Strokestown connections

The adjudicator has found out a little more about the project via the Town Team.

This is very much a collaborative effort as all the work will be done locally by other community organisations such as the Mens Shed, Local Schools and other relevant community groups.

One assumes that Roscommon County Council has some involvement in this in terms of possible need for planning permission and infrastructural work which would fall under the responsibility of the local area engineer.

Is funding forthcoming under the Town and Village Renewal Programme or via Roscommon Leader or other such funding mechanism?

The guidelines in this category under Buildings and Public Spaces are pretty wide ranging and self explanatory.

The adjudicator would have liked to see a little more explanatory narrative of the work carried out during the last two years pertaining to the guidelines.

One is cognate of the fact that Covid hit all communities in a different way and that for some mobilising people to engage in voluntary work presented a set of difficulties not encountered before.

For the work that you did get involved in an additional mark is awarded.

It would have been nice to have been able to do an onsite visit and make personal observations on the presentation of properties, traffic calming measures, street lighting and road infrastructure and the condition of footpaths etc but hopefully that will be an opportunity afforded to adjudicators next year.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

The 2019 report was very complimentary to the work that had been undertaken in this category and made suggestions for certain improvements where it was deemed necessary.

The standard was deemed to be very high which indicated that between the then entry form and the adjudication site visit that there was a lot of detail submitted.

The interim period has to say the least being unprecedented in the manner in which it has affected the work and objectives of community groups.

The input under this category is minimal in that it just highlights the projects under N and M without any extended explanatory notes.

To be honest it has made it difficult for the adjudicator to get a handle on what actually has taken place at Cloonslannon Burial Ground or proposed Amenity Park.

The old saying says "a picture paints a thousand words" and few pictures of before and after work would have been beneficial.

That said credit is due to a small committee for maintaining large areas of communal spaces plus shrub and flower beds on a regular basis all year round.

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

The objective of this category as outlined in the guidelines is that a committee or group be able show an understanding and awareness of biodiversity in ones locality and be able to inform the local community of how local species and habitats should be managed.

During the last two years the Local Authorities and other agencies such as Biodiversity Ireland adapted to the restrictions imposed by Covid by running online courses and information sessions on a variety of Biodiversity subjects.

More local communities have become aware of the habitats etc in their local areas and have become more interested in the need for proper preservation and conservation measures.

As a committee you have been involved in a number of pertinent mini projects such as maintaining pollinator areas, ensuring swift boxes have been placed in different parts of the town and also engaging with Roscommon County Council to identify suitable parts of approach roads into the town as locations for wild meadow strips and pollinator friendly planting.

Overall your work merits an increase of an additional mark.

Continue your links with www.swiftconservation.ie and www.biodiversityireland.ie

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

The objective of this category is in reality to be able to organise activities within ones community that will contribute to having a more sustainable local environment for the future generations.

Doing more with less is geared to promoting the concept of reducing the production of waste at source.

This will reduce the use of what has become an environmental hazard excessive amounts of unnecessary plastic and adapting to alternative materials such as bamboo.

What you have in place, whilst not exclusive to Strokestown, is in line with the objective of the category and an additional mark is awarded.

As was recommended in 2019 to get more out of this sector in terms of creating even a greater awareness of all things that contribute to a more sustainable environment consider looking at the following websites for idea generation.

www.localprevention.ie and www.sustainableprocessing.ie

The circular economy has become a buzz phrase these days but back in the day the circular economy was probably

at its peak where the mantra of repair and reuse was to the fore.

We have learned the lessons one hopes from the days of the “throwaway society” and that thriftiness might once again become a worthwhile quality and people might discover practical skills that they never knew they possessed.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The 2019 report highlights the benefit of an adjudicator visit as it outlines in detail and in a praiseworthy manner the work that has been done in the year under consideration.

Some additional expanded detail or an a photograph or two would have been welcome but one understands the restrictive conditions that you have worked within over the last few years.

It is not easy to carry weekly litter collections all over the town and the housing estates on the outskirts.

Well done on the ongoing monitoring of the local bottle bank and also on upgrading the anti litter signage.

The adjudicator thinks that Roscommon County Council has a dog walkers programme and if the committee is not involved it should consider becoming a member.

The scourge of dog poo has become near epidemic in the last two years and has to be tackled by programmes such as the aforementioned.

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

The painting of some unoccupied buildings in conjunction with Stokestown Town Team is probably a carryover from a project that was started in 2019.

Again at the risk of over repeating one's self this is work that could have been captured best in a series of pictures as has been done elsewhere in some other centres.

There's a reference to continued support to the residents of a certain estates in line with the Tidy Towns Estate Management plan.

The adjudicator did not have access to the plan as it was not included with the entry thus commenting on it is not possible.

Next year will see the adjudicator given the opportunity of a visit (hopefully) and a better assessment will be made based on personal observations.

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

This category is one where the adjudicator would review each entrance into a town or village and make comments accordingly.

As one cannot do this reflecting on what has been done from an online submission is difficult

One accepts that you are heavily reliant on Roscommon County Council for the upkeep of approach roads but in better times to come maybe an arrangement with the council can made to allow you to engage in your own Adapt an entrance project and assign different entrances into the town to sub groups of your committee and volunteer core.

Mark remains the same as 2019

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator is pretty familiar with Strokestown and is aware of its strengths in terms of visitor attractions.

The committee need to get back on track with the Town Team and make a joint entry submission for next year's competition when hopefully we all can resort to something more normal.

The town has far more potential in the competition but this potential needs to be worked on.

You are wished well for the future.