

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Listowel** Ref: **345**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **322**
Category: **D** Date(s): **30/06/2015**
14/08/2015

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	43	43
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	40	40
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	14	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	38
TOTAL MARK	450	311	322

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Congratulations to Listowel TidyTowns Group for entering the 2015 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your entry form, the super map with not only the numbered map references but the address of the project, your detailed and colourful 3 Year Plan, your booklet of supplementary material. There was an amount of material included in that one map but it was manageable. It is obvious that this a well organised committee with a lot of backing in the community. The adjudicator is most impressed by the sources of funding listed. You state that your main funding comes from your Annual Church Gate Collection. That immediately suggests that Mass is still well attended in Listowel and that the people of Listowel value the works you carry out each year. The backing of the Vintners and the success of your raffle and pub quiz reinforce the impression that you are well received among the residents of Listowel. The "empty" shop window is an invitation to become part of the TidyTowns movement in the town and positioned as it is on a busy street keeps your profile in the public eye. The window also illustrates the value Listowel has on its Heritage. The fact that business premises paint earlier for the TidyTowns rather than for the September races suggests a sea change in public perception. You certainly have succeeded in fostering good relationships throughout the community in Listowel. The adjudicator wonders if your book of Appendices enhances your submission or not. It requires a lot of work, it includes information already available in your entry form. Much of the material is of greater value to your historian than to the adjudicator. Your adjudicator is bound to examine the list of works carried out in the current year. The extra material can cause confusion in the work of the adjudicator and might cause the omission of something relevant and important. Let your work and your town speak for itself. Just a thought. Sermon over. Well done on a fine submission overall.

Built Environment and Streetscape / An Timpeallacht Thógtha agus Sráid-dreacha:

Your town centre is a joy to visit. There is no need to rattle off the main buildings but they are beautifully presented. More importantly they are being used to full advantage. It is the sense of space that appeals, the relaxed atmosphere as people wander around, seemingly at home in the surroundings that have been created for them. The streetscape is an important element in that creation, a streetscape that has possibly renewed itself in order to present the modern traditional townscape. One must look up to the upper storeys along the street for these upper floors compete successfully with their more popular, colourful ground floor brethren in appearance and antiquity. There are reminders of your past all over whether that be literary or plastering, the latter bestowing a valued appearance on that townscape. The traffic crawls from time to time but people seem to be tolerant and seem to be aware that they have a duty to park with others in mind and parking possibilities abound. Imagine 'unrestricted free parking' in a town centre! An unintended advantage of the one way system is that it forces the driver to visit nearly every street in town, an attractive vista for the visitor. Then at the civic and public building level schools beckon the kids in, the Library building also draws one in, the Comhairle Chondae building does not fill one with foreboding, even the Garda station is welcoming. Having mentioned the modern library one feels obliged to acknowledge the

Carnegie Hall also. But the Garden Centre and the buildings containing the Revenue offices show that this town has more strings to its bow than the traditional styles and can wear its modernity with ease. Your submission seems like a diary of coming and goings in the built environment over the year. The adjudicator cannot understand why you would list the buildings in need of attention. Let him find them as he found the jewels in the town crown. The adjudicator stumbled on the famine graveyard, ever before he saw your TidyTowns window. That few yards on the Ballybunion Road is among the main highlights of the visit. There is the information panel that rekindles sadness at the torture of people during the famine and in the workhouse, there is the mound of grass so beautifully landscaped, then there is the railway bridge from the sean iarainn ród and one has yet to visit the Celtic Cross. Teampallín Bán seems so appropriate as a name, reinforcing the sense of antiquity of this area. I justify my extra mark by your concern for wheelchair access down at the river and for the sounds at the pedestrian crossing in the square. Listowel shows a respect throughout for the native tongue. In one instance we are told that we are on Market Street and directly across the road the street sign gives us the 'real' name, Gleann a' Phúca. It is easy to love Listowel.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The landscaped Listowel is a joy to experience. Where the built environment does not allow natural growth selected key spots are chosen for a floral display in a tub or half barrel, just in case we forget that this is summer. Insipid wall appearance is carpeted with shrubs, for instance on the John B Keane Road. The roundabouts express their differing personalities through their design and planting. But one should not think that this is landscaping for landscaping sake. Charles St is devoid of floral colour, the cottages are given the opportunity to express their personality unhindered. Much the same could be said of the buildings on the main streets. But as one moves along approach roads or into the estates the variety of shrub, the variety of texture is most appealing. The famine graveyard is celebrated with the accompanying landscaping. Even along the river bank rose beds are introduced to compliment the natural surroundings.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fiadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádúrtha:

The stand-out feature of the visit to Listowel is the experience of the town park. That town park is going to be dealt with under wildlife but one could mention it under built environment or landscaping or recreational areas or tidiness also. For the adjudicator this is a wildlife treasure. I set out on a walk to see what attracted people here and discovered the Garden of Europe, your biodiversity garden, the cemetery, the river. But sure this area is a biodiversity garden in its own right. Trees are planted as non-native species are removed. Then your biodiversity garden, Gurtinard, a name that resonates of years of digging and planting. The information panel has more information than a six week correspondence course, all relevant, all of interest, all needing a camera to retain it. But all showing that this is a group with a hands-on grasp of what is involved in this section. One is pleased that the youth of the town are learning about the local biodiversity. The observations of the worker in the garden of Europe on the birds he saw is a major source of information, presumably that list in the Appendix, though hardly? Another aspect of the wildlife that arouses interest is the discovery of Balsam and Japanese Knotweed. The outbreak of the latter along the river bank is serious and one is pleased that its eradication is being professionally supervised. The balsam seems such an innocent looking plant but it too seems to be part of the natural growth along the river but not as serious. Keep the giant rhubarb under control in the Garden of Europe. Later on the walk one gains access to the river and a view of the bridge. At every turn there is an information panel that both satisfies one's curiosity and whets the appetite for more. So this is the centre of your wildlife activities. The adjudicator feels that the shrubberies that are to be found all over the town provide food and shelter for all of God's creatures in the town. Are there bee-keepers in Listowel? If there are they merit a special mention in your submission.

Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuanaithe:

Your list of sustainability projects shows the extent to which everyday life in Listowel has been changed in a few short years. You in TidyTowns can take a bow for you have been instruments of that change. Recycling is now an everyday event, schools value the educational advantages of being involved in the Green Flag movement, the Ladies can be the height of fashion by raiding Granny's wardrobe, text has replaced paper, water butts will soon be as common as the barrel at the gable end, people go to the trouble to educate themselves on proper management of our energy resources, the Kerry Environmental Area Officer feels its worth his while to attend a Friday Farmers Market in Listowel, even people in the heart of a town are composting, charity shops are seen as treasure troves, we are being encouraged to cycle to work in the rain and leave the car at home. All of the above happen in Listowel. All are novel ways in which we manage our waste and use our resources. The future is the next present. The adjudicator visits your 3 Year Plan to get a vision of where you are going next. Is he satisfied that he can see the clichéd road map to to-morrow's Listowel? You decide. More importantly are you satisfied that the novel features of your waste and resource management are clearly mapped, to use another cliché, 'going forward'?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your submission shows that tidiness and litter issues are a major priority for you. You can feel proud of your achievements in this section. Listowel presents itself as a tidy, homely town as a result of the maintained rich landscaping, the miles of footpaths and weed free kerbing, the general lack of clutter by fly posting, the care of unoccupied premises, street sweeping, the painted appearance of buildings. There are acres of grass to be maintained and all look well. Road signage is attractive and clean. The finger signposting beautiful. You have laid solid building blocks that tend towards tidiness and you maintain the effort. Well done. We are all aware of the tidiness 'black spot', the consolation is that nothing lasts forever and that will change too. On the delightful river walk the adjudicator came across a bench with one board missing off the seat and sighed: 'They are human after all'. The many bullet points in your submission suggest a continued war on littering through multi pronged determined awareness and clean up attacks. The adjudicator walked all of the streets and is pleased to announce

that dogs are behaving and using the doggy bags that are certainly available in the Park . Graffiti is not a problem. Litter is a rarity. The Bring Centre is spotless. On the occasions that the Park was busy there was litter about but one would not declare that the Park was littered. Appendix 6, when it was eventually found, added every little to the content of your submission. One or two photos would have sufficed. The adjudicator searched for what 'Cach in Trash Out' meant , wondering was there a sine fada missing but the treasure hunt yielded nothing.

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

In this busy centre of population there are many generations of housing. But all generations seem to have settled naturally into their particular setting. Estate entrances are appealing as in Céide na Féile and in the more modern estates in suburbia. There is a sense of space created by the open spaces even when the estate is densely populated as in Ballygologue Park . Kids have room to play and there is still room for planting here and there. The open space is used for an abstract piece of landscaping in the Writings, a delight. The colourful planting in Kenny Heights was just one highlight of the estate. The housing on Greenville Road is a delight but the contribution the front gardens make to their surroundings is another noteworthy feature. In Ferndene great use is made of climbing ivy and clematis to hide bare walls. The adjudicator loved the bed of Easter lilies. Take care that the hedge along the wall does not interfere with pedestrians on the footpath at Lartigue Village. One wondered if there is a particular reason why the grass has not been mown. Beautiful houses in the Village. But one must pay tribute to the residences in the heart of the town for instance at the Square, residences which bestow a gravitas on their surroundings. The plaster work on the residences on Bridge road are another joy. One side of this street does need an uplift. The new houses on this street have not settled yet and need a little encouragement.

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

The visitor arriving in Listowel feels that they are being welcomed to the town as soon as Listowel announces itself. And Listowel does announce itself on the main approach roads with the sculptures which seem to address that visitor. One supposes the Tarbert approach is the signature approach road with the roundabout , the sculpture, the pointed stone raised beds, the shrubberies . All a wonderful welcome. The Writings and manuscript sculpture gives a status to one of the minor approach roads but how appropriate. The Abbeyfeale welcome has its own stamp on welcome. This is the nature route, very few houses until after the bridge, very little interference with the majestic trees that do not need prettifying to welcome the guest. From Tralee its the walls and the bridge that engage one, that is when one recovers from the wonderful sculpture out the road. The roadside homes provide the texture, the colour with their delightful front gardens. Bicycle lanes are noted. Apart from fine housing the Ballybunion Road is highlighted for the Teampalín Bán area. Convent Road is appropriately named, the Presentation wall dominating the town end. Here again the shrubs are striking and well placed, those nuns' contribution to the town so tastefully celebrated in the town centre. As one continues to Greenville Road one notices that the planting is on the private gardens. This vegetation softens the appearance all the way to the convent. It is the length of the footpath on the Ballylongford approach that impressed. One wonders if there is a need for all of the signage on the enterprise entrances on this latter road. The charm of Ballygologue road is that it still retains traces of times well past as well as accommodating modern Listowel. If one does not walk around the town one misses out on an important part of the heart beat of Listowel. There was no name to be found in a very old part most likely called Mill Lane where one was surrounded by walls from another era. An inviting coachyard entrance led one in there and one was delighted not to find the standard graffiti and dilapidation but this haven of old stone that is neatly maintained. The exciting street art on the Youth Cafe then led into a fine free car park and this led to the fire station, the Town Council offices and the library. The real gem in here is a cluster of houses. So what might be called back areas are well worth a visit. Sadly at the back of the Castle one wondered if all of the advertising was necessary. Surely the people who use this premises are aware of what is on offer.

Concluding Remarks:

The tone of the report surely conveys the adjudicator's message: it is good to be here. The varied contributions of the many have been imaginative and diligent in creating present day Listowel. One senses that is a wholesome place in which to settle. Well done.

Second Round Adjudication:

Listowel Tidy Towns Committee and volunteers are committed, focussed and hard working. And on the ground it is very apparent that you are high achievers. Your entry form includes some striking numbers: 24 strategy meetings a year, 97 protected buildings, 250 trees planted in February 2015. As well as the window display on Lower William Street, other premises were noticed with posters and stickers demonstrating the support for your work. Your second adjudicator was determined to find some litter – bottle banks, riverside paths, side lanes and parks were explored and only a few items of fresh litter were noticed and just one sample of dog waste. Dog-waste bag were widely available. Your proactive approach to your problems of dog waste is to be applauded. There were a small number of tidiness issues with old signage, graffiti on a private home and vegetation growth in gutters. Cigarette butt littering outside a bank ATM and some public houses was a minor issue as it appeared that all business owners quickly swept up outside their premises.

The riverside wall is a lovely amenity and it was good to see ferns and ivy growing on the bridge walls – all important aspects of your biodiversity.

The new concrete wall on Convent Road is all ready for maybe some ivy to soften the impact of the large expansive hard surfacing here. Well done on the treatment (and related signage) of invasive plant species. You do have a problem with this throughout the town from Convent Street and all along the river side, and there may even be some

giant rhubarb (*Gunnera tinctoria*) at the lovely Garden of Europe. The Garden of Europe had the most wonderful sculpture to John B Keane whose wife sadly passed away on the morning your adjudicator was admiring this wonderful work.

The entrance to the races was not as welcoming as expected. The open space at the top of Racecourse road had grass clippings dumped along the boundary wall and the edge had been sprayed with weed killer. So much could be done with this corner of Listowel. Crossing the pedestrian entrance across the river however would be a very special way to commence a good day at the races.

Approach roads really tell a story showing visitors that they are arriving somewhere special. The John Kennelly Roundabout was a lovely example of sustainable landscaping and the enhancement works at the writers sculpture nearby caught the eye nicely (your second adjudicator found it!). Town centre landscaping and your management of open spaces had a lovely balance of attractive floral planting that did not distract from the wonderful built heritage. And whoa – your built heritage has been so wonderfully managed. The Historic Towns funded initiative on 15 separate premises was money so well invested as the streetscape of Listowel was wonderfully presented as a result.

After 22 years in the national Tidy Towns Competition Listowel is now a clear leader and all in your community should be very proud of your efforts.