

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Sneem** Ref: **349**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **317**
Category: **B** Date(s): **18/07/2015**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2014 | Mark Awarded 2015 |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning | 60 | 48 | 48 |
| Built Environment and Streetscape | 50 | 39 | 40 |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces | 50 | 41 | 41 |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities | 50 | 35 | 36 |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50 | 17 | 21 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 64 | 63 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 30 | 30 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 38 | 38 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 312 | 317 |

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Congratulations to Sneem Development Society for entering the 2015 SuperValu TidyTowns Competition. Our wish for you is that your participation in the competition assists you in your work for the coming year. Thank you for your beautifully presented submission with the text enhanced by the photos, with concise, relevant information in each section. The map and the index with the map are a great resource for the adjudicator. Your three main goals are clearly definable and worthwhile. It appears that your work is being steered by the two reports named, a professional manner in which to conduct your business. Well done. The tone of your submission is low key and understated, possibly a by-product of the struggle for the survival you mention over the years. Patience and lack of hype seem to be local traits that have served you well. It seems to the adjudicator that you have learned quite a lot about progressing your goals over the last 50 years. For that reason the adjudicator is reluctant to mention a 3 Year Plan. There is every chance that you have been down this route before and watched the plan gather dust as soon as the TidyTowns gave the marks for it. Maybe there is something in the Newell Plan that could be copied and pasted into a 3 Year Plan, to save yourselves from the annual sermon!

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

The adjudicator is glad that you mentioned the key role that tourism plays in the life of the people of Sneem as that emphasis is obvious on the streets. The shop front is out in the open air, creating that holiday sense. In another town such street activity would be tut-tutted as creating street clutter. Not so here. Hence the street is alive with breakfast eaters and coffee drinkers, the sight of which tempts others to join them. The many colours of the premises and of the houses support that holiday town feel. Well done on your achievement at the Church and Community Centre, the parking, the surfaces, the planting. Now the Church was locked, a pity, but one was enthralled at the Matisse nature of the outdoor stations of the cross. All public buildings are very well maintained and their presentation is vibrant as in the beautiful school building with its new stone wall, the Day Care Centre, the Garda Station, the Church of Ireland, the hidden away Fire Station, the Enterprise Centre with its stone, the Resource Centre, even the GAA complex. The toilets are spotless. You are aware of where weaknesses lie as in the appearance of a few premises. One is certain that you have made attempts to make the corrugated roofed cottage a presentable museum piece but those efforts have been in vain as, with the natural flair you have, that cottage could become a jewel in the Sneem crown. The sash windows were admired. As was the pathway and the walkway, the grid adding an aesthetic touch to the construction. The Irish language accompanies one all the time but the highlight for the adjudicator is Sráidbhaile na n-éan.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

There is so much delightful natural vegetation in Sneem that one wonders if it could be improved upon but the

answer is that it has been improved upon. From the moment one arrived from Waterville the green fingers were obvious. And this work has been on-going for many years right up to the present. One loved the hawthorn in one place, the beech planting in another, the red robin at the Church. But one could spend the day writing and still leave someone's work out. The adjudicator loved the images created by contrasts as in grass neatly mown and the grass let grow wild, not for visual delight only but to serve the needs of wildlife. One loved the use made of willow in a few locations, as unexpectedly down by the Fire Station. In which category does one mention the Garden of the Senses and the two river walks? Under wildlife would be accurate as the information panels were informed by the biodiversity studies. Or under sustainable living as the poly tunnel and the allotments are resource management measures. I decided to get those walks over with as wonderful recreational amenities. The winding paths at all times leading to a new treasure. Should one go through that gate or not. One did and discovered the pyramids and felt one walked with the fairies on the way the fairies went. Apart from the strictly gardening features of the Garden of the Senses one loved the tree sculpture and the pergola. Kids must love the maze. Again contrasts sharpened the senses as shrub planting and wild wooded areas vied for attention. And all the while the information panels guided one along. But the walks are but one element of the landscaped design of this village. The village green is a delight, enhanced by the sculpture and the association with Charles de Gaulle and also with Cearbhall Ó Dálaigh. But the street is not awash with hanging baskets and tubs. The buildings are allowed express themselves and do not need support from floral displays. The adjudicator loves the manner in which the natural sandstone is allowed protrude in many locations giving a natural look to the house built by man or the garden conceived by woman.

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

The adjudicator is awarding an extra mark in this category for your determination to rid yourselves of the Japanese Knotweed. The adjudicator looked about but found none, which is a surprise because it can take time to eradicate it fully. Now you must take on the gunnera which appears in a few locations. One is pleased that all of the information about the wildlife of the area is informed by proper research. You can imagine that the adjudicator felt as angry as you must when discovering the empty stands with the information sheets missing. There are so many areas that have been created to cater for your wildlife and to make people aware of the biodiversity in their vicinity. The walks have been dealt with but as one leaves town for Waterville that area is a credit to all who created it and to those who now maintain it. The use of the willow bark as a mulch is noted. Great to read that the Mens' Shed are on board for the bat boxes, which inevitably were not seen but one knows the bats know where they are.

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

The adjudicator is impressed by the multi-pronged approach to the elimination of waste and to your resource management schemes. You have invested heavily in upgrading public buildings in accordance with the most modern standards. LED is the way forward also. At another level you are providing opportunities for the locals to produce their own food while making them aware of conserving water. The work is obvious, even the water butts. The allotments are productive, even the onions tempting. You have overcome the hazards of Community Composting but now that I write this I wonder if it will be difficult to remove the compost from the wooden bins. The 'Nearly New Shop' really tickles the fancy of this adjudicator. The pity was that it was closed. Each item mentioned as a project in this section is highly visible and its work measureable, as in the Men's Shed, for instance. You mentioned the seven Green Flag s achieved by the school, a wonderful achievement but did not mention the Blue Flag, another wonderful achievement. The covered bike stand in the school indicates to the adjudicator that cycling to school is promoted in Sneem. Well done. Where do you go from here? Standing still is not an option. Maybe a 3 Year Plan would help you focus on new projects and goals.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

This year's adjudicator cannot justify the mark you have attained in this section. From a litter control viewpoint the adjudicator is satisfied that you are active not only in picking but also in creating awareness. Only one instance of dog fouling was experienced in a prolonged walk about. All laudable. There are many elements that contribute to a tidy impression as in the lack of weeds along approach roads, defined areas of wall construction ditch and planting, well maintained grass areas, beautiful street furniture, good road surface and renewed footpaths. One loved the treatment of your Bring Centre. Those pale green benches create a Sneem brand throughout. But there are black spots that disappoint. It is clear that some business proprietors do not fully endorse the Tidy Towns ideals nor your efforts and are careless about the appearance of their premises. There are doors on the way to the playground that are in urgent need of painting and that would solve the problem. The grotto does not even have a flower and needs a total makeover. Does Sneem hotel need that sign on the Waterville road? Some of the road signs on that Waterville approach road need upgrading.

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

Starting in the village centre the residential buildings are a delight. Most come from a village built in the nineteenth century, most likely and they contribute handsomely to the tourist village experience. Then there are bungalows and cottages along the N70 and on the road to the GAA which also add to the appearance of the housing stock. The houses on the Quay Road are a treat. Radharc na Mara has a name stone befitting the contribution that this estate has made to the development of Sneem for over sixty years. The care of the grass, the view, the playground all add to the quality of living in this area. Regrettably the holiday home estate inside does not maintain that high standard despite adding to the traffic through Seaview. Another estate beside the school also needs intervention from a maintenance viewpoint. There is a general air of neglect in both.

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

As soon as one meets the Sneem rock with its red writing one is imbued with a 'feel good' attitude. It is a wonderful start created by imaginative use of a junction and the strip of land that that junction has provided. Though quite formal in design its informality that really pleases. Well done on controlling the montbretia into little islands. Then one loves the walls and ditches as one approaches the school. That school and the buildings across add to the anticipation. Then the street takes over and its coffee time. The other end of the N70 has fine elements, as in the new fence and the stone indents on the wall with their summer bedding, the perennial planting to the front of the Sneem hotel but the challenges to appearance dampens one's anticipation. Mind you the parking opportunities could be the decisive factor in stopping or not. The road to the GAA is a lovely rural experience on which some people were fortunate to make their homes. One could say that back areas are rare but the back of the Community Centre has been tidied very well. The area down by the butchers shop could be tidied without too much fuss.

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator took your advice to smell the roses. Yes, this visit took far too long but the adjudicator became immersed in the walks, the gardens, the coffee and lunch, the atmosphere. One feels that after Sneem won the TidyTowns in the 80's that the appearance of Sneem must have then deteriorated as much remedial work seems to have taken place in recent years. If that reading is true then you deserve even more plaudits for your work. For Sneem is now a 'must stop' location.