

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dromahair** Ref: **673**
County: **Leitrim** Mark: **293**
Category: **C** Date(s): **24/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	46
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	38	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	22	25
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	24	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	59
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	32	34
TOTAL MARK	450	286	293

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Dromahair is very welcome to the 2015 SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition ! Your participation for more than 20 years is important to the national Tidy Towns movement which is over 50 years old. Your completed entry form with detailed responses, clearly annotated map, five year plan and other information including photographs were most helpful to the adjudicators. You clearly have a very vibrant committee with valuable expertise and it was most encouraging to read that more people are coming on board to help out. Also, it was interesting to read the impressively long list of agencies, bodies and businesses who support your activities. Having school children involved augers well for the future. The new heritage sub-group no doubt will unearth interesting material. Please appreciate that this is not within the scope of this report to comment on all the many improvements you have made – rather to highlight some and also offer constructive criticism. Congratulations for winning your category in the Leitrim Floral Pride Competition, to Stanford's for the Best Business Award and particularly to Fionn McGowan at the age of 7 for his dedication to picking litter and watering flowers.

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

Undoubtedly the best way to experience the built environment of Dromahair is on foot with cheerful bird song emanating from beautiful trees including the rowans and birches at J. Stanford where a bowl of soup was enjoyed . Whereas the general standard was high again this year some vacant properties had deteriorated and consequently had a negative impact – Breffni Centre Hotel for example. The Post Office was neatly presented. Some premises admired were Ann's Cutting Corner, The Beauty Retreat, Early Luna Restaurant and Dromahair Pharmacy. The retention of F. Kelly's traditional raised lettering is commended. The Blue Devon needed freshening up of its sign fascia but the hand lettering is effective. While Centra was very tidy full window advertising is considered unnecessary and out of keeping with the streetscape. Newer commercial buildings such as opposite O'Rourke's seat tend to need frequent painting. It is a great pity that The Abbey Manor Hotel is closed. The temporary fence (now rusting) at the front of the site next to the hotel should be removed as it does not appear to serve any purpose. The Garda Station needed freshening up, particularly its boundary wall and gates; we note that the boxing club, the new owners, intend to do this. Breffni Holiday Cottages is a great facility but the gate urgently needs restoration. The Eircom building could be enhanced with planting. The contemporary Dromahair Primary Care Centre with its blue, white and grey composition was liked. The school with its well kept garden was favourably noted although some railings will need attention before next year. The library is a fine well proportioned building but regrettably the design of the replacement windows is inappropriate. The Churches were again presented to a very high standard.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Landscaping is a dominant element of the heritage of the village and it is great to see the results of continuing

interest. Mature trees and hedging as well as stone walls are just as important as buildings to the streetscapes of Dromahair. The tunnel project seems to have been very successful. Because of the amount of permanent planting some container planting may not be necessary. Note that the adjudicators do not favour trees planted in containers. Nonetheless the work invested in the timber planters is appreciated. Permanent tree planting in front of Woodview Inn is recommended to separate the car park from the road domain. There is great scope to enhance the area around the Visitor Information Display where paving was weedy and wrecked cars have been abandoned; the mature sycamore here would be a good starting point. The paved area to the left of the Engineer's Office offers another opportunity for planting. The treatment of other incidental areas was enjoyed, including the imaginative O'Rourke's Seat (which had to be sat into to experience!) with planters and visitor information alongside and elsewhere, the admirably composed water pump with bench and planting.

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

Lough Gill and the River Bonet are significant natural amenities. The river walk to Creevalea Abbey and the nature / exercise walk are most enjoyable. The increased number of bird boxes was noted – are you monitoring their usage? We look forward to visiting the sensory garden and education trail. Native trees and hedging, unlike conifers, around the town are responsible for so much wildlife. If not already you could become involved in the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015-2020. Information is available at <http://www.biodiversityireland.ie> but basically Irish bee and hoverfly pollinators are in decline. This is a serious problem and requires immediate action to ensure the sustainability of food production, avoid additional economic impact on the agricultural sector and protect the health of the environment.

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

The Bring Centre is a good facility but the surrounding area was a little weedy and littered. The introduction of rainwater butts to reduce dependence on treated tap water is commended, also using river water for power washing projects. As well as saving fuel the walking school bus has a considerable health benefit. The Transition Year e-waste project produced interesting results. Hopefully you will continue to engage with TY students on varying projects in future years. Keep up the good work and regularly repeat the mantra "Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle".

It has transpired that some marks for Sustainable Waste and Resource Management in County Leitrim last year were inconsistent with other counties and consequently we have reallocated marks this year. We emphasise that, despite a reduction of marks under this heading this year, we fully appreciate the good work you have done and overall you have not lost marks.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village generally had such a tidy appearance that blemishes such as outbreaks of weeds here and there at kerbsides and in side or back areas tended to catch the eye. Walking is a much more effective means than driving to scrutinise everywhere. Remember that a consistent high standard is vital to raise your marks to the top echelon of the competition. Abandoned cars have already been mentioned. It is recommended that a comprehensive survey be undertaken to identify untidy yards and areas with abandoned surplus materials and debris. Watch out for distant views to backs of houses to ensure the expected standard is kept up – particularly relevant to the Drumlease / Wood Green area. One litter bin was at the point of overflowing but generally a very high standard of litter control was witnessed. Hopefully, in a few years time you won't have to organise major clean-ups as there won't be any litter or dumping.

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

Much of Dromahair is essentially residential, incorporating the older parts of the village between Main Street and Back Lane as well as more recent developments on Drumlease Road and behind Back Lane. Prolific gardens were the norm along Back Lane. Lovely gardens of some street houses were noted, including next to A Cut Above where the fuchsia hedge cascaded over the wall. Efforts to improve Millbank Glen estate are acknowledged. The Acres was admired for some prolific gardens in the Dromahair style, neat grass and young trees although kerbside weeds were a problem in places and some trees needed replacement. Kerbside weeds too were a problem in Abbeyvale but the houses and open spaces were generally well presented. Doodles Child Care appeared a happy place! The sculpture near the entrance to Rock Valley was admired, also the combination of strong and pastel colours of the houses but badly stained boundary walls and kerbside weeds detracted. A shrubbery in Churchfield was becoming quite weedy and several gardens were overgrown. Garran na Foraose had some stained walls but commendably there were no kerbside weeds. The Drumlease and Wood Green estates had well mown grass areas, some well presented shrubberies and young trees but once again weedy kerbsides and some stained walls let down the standard. A new estate on the Drumshanbo road is planted with low box hedging but regrettably much of it had long grass growing through it; also kerbside weeds had not been attended to and grass was overdue a cut. Regularly repainting boundary walls is so important as when shabby they immediately catch the eye. Learning from history the best boundaries are hedges or stone walls. Having seen so much variation between exceptional presentation and neglect it is sincerely hoped that the residents groups will actively encourage everyone to participate in the maintenance of public areas as well as their own. If everybody attended to the kerbsides adjacent to their own property there would be no weeds!

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

The various approach roads have their own characteristic and generally a high standard was sustained. Naming all

the roads and lanes is a great idea. The recently built stone walls beautifully compliment the older ones. It is suggested that perhaps a continuous row of trees might be planted along either side of Drumlease Road. The maintained grass verges gave a favourable first impression on the Drumshanbo approach, also the planting at Ballintogher junction. The new playground and amenity facilities on the Parkes Castle road as well as the planting by the waste water treatment plant made a dramatic impact on this beautiful road lined with mature trees and stone walls. Road and path surfacing in most areas was good. Street furniture too was well maintained apart from a few signs and litter bins which would have benefitted from freshening up. The absence of overhead wirescape where complete makes such a difference ! The milestones are an important heritage element.

Concluding Remarks:

Dromahair on the banks of the River Bonet is an idyllic village with an interesting history. We look forward to returning !