

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Derrahaun** Ref: **2076**  
County: **Longford** Mark: **246**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **18/06/2015**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	23	24
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	22	23
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	39
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	22	23
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	11	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	60	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	24	26
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	37
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>246</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Doireachan Mór / Derrahaun (We noted that the village name sign on the Kilashee approach road differs in the spelling of your name, calling your village Derraghan). In any event welcome to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition! You have spelt the village name as Derrahaun yourselves in your entry form so we will use that version. You are a small village, but you still manage to get six members on your committee. You hold monthly meetings which is good to hear and organise regular cleanups. The local authority, local environmental groups, the CE scheme and the residents group all help you in your work. We are delighted to know that you hold monthly public meetings. These are difficult to organise and run and you are courageous to undertake this good communications with the community. You also mention your door-to-door funding. This is another opportunity to liaise with your residents. Perhaps in such a small village this is enough. However it is worth considering perhaps some modern communication methods such as Facebook in order to engage with the younger population.

You engage with your schools - with the Board of Management, parents, and students. You also engage with the local priest and parish council. Well done on continuing to enter the competition over the last five years. You have improved your environment and your marks in the process. It is a pity that you did not summarise how you see your groups work contributing to the development of your community. We assume that you consider it to be worthwhile as you are continuing to participate.

In the guidelines to the Entry Form you were asked to sequentially number each ('mappable') project undertaken for this year 2015 and to carry this numbering system through to the village map. This has not been done. Please remember to read the guidelines carefully before submitting next year's Entry Form and map. Otherwise your map was helpful.

We do not appear to have received a Tidy Towns plan from you. We would encourage you to submit a Tidy Towns plan - a three or five-year plan will focus your mind on what you can hope to achieve - no matter how simple or short a plan it is. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Derrahaun in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2016.

Well done on having your village name boulder in Irish. You may be able to think of other ways to increase the use of Irish in your environment.

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

Landscaping, flower beds and shrubbery belong to the landscaping category so we consider them there - even though you mention them under this category heading. Well done on erecting new signage on entry to the area. The new walkway in the wildlife area and the planting of wildflowers is considered under the relevant category heading which is wildlife and amenities. Try to remember to list projects under the relevant specific category headings. We admired the boulder with your name sign 'as Gaeilge' in gold. Your built environment consists of residential houses which are well presented.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

Derrahaun is a village located in typical bogland countryside - and owes its existence to this fact. This landscape is very special both visually and environmentally. You are the custodians of an important heritage aspect of our countryside. You have maintained the traditional hedgerows and augmented the hedges and boundaries by the planting of shrubs - along for instance the Longford Road. Always remember to choose native trees and shrubs traditional to your area in any augmentation programme. We observed the newer and older semi-mature trees on the grass margins on this approach. The newer trees (and some of the older semi-mature plantings) need to be staked more carefully. We also consider the material around the tree base to be unsuitable for growth. Please check this out with a horticulturalist. We would also like a professional opinion on the tree pruning/cutting noted. We just want to ensure that these trees thrive. Some dead branches need to be removed from hedging opposite the semi-mature trees/grass margin. We felt possibly - that the number of 'Keep off the grass signs' were a little bit urban looking in a rural area. Are they really necessary?

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

Well done on the walkway and the wildflowers. You correctly say that the village has a diversity of flora, fauna and wildlife on its doorstep. This may be obvious to you, but it is interesting to explore these habitats further. Have you conducted any surveys of the wildlife, fauna or flora? There are tremendous resources available in relation to bogland ecology, and we would suggest that you research this for 2016. We are sure that the Heritage Officer of your local authority would guide you in this. Your research can be a simple Derrahaun-related exploration of your local bogland. As well as survey work - which can be carried out by the community under the guidance of a knowledgeable person - you could also perhaps organise a guided bog walk. Different aspects of the bog will interest different people. Do you have a young person from the area interested in biology in secondary school or perhaps botany, zoology or other related subject at a third level institution? Perhaps they might undertake work on your bog surrounds as a dissertation project. When you have some locally based research done you can begin to consider presenting this to the public at large in whatever way you see fit. Signage or smart phone apps are two ways to go - but this only after you have gathered accurate information. The signage which you have erected simply marks out a wildlife area at the crossroads. We strongly suggest that you do not nail any signage to any tree. Signage should be free standing - in order not to damage the tree. We observed your bird boxes. Well done on these. Were they made locally? Would it be possible in time to replace evergreen hedging with deciduous hedging in the interests of providing better for wildlife?

We observed what appeared to be fairly recent hedge trimming at the crossroads area. Remember that it is permissible to trim hedging along cultivated ground (e.g. gardens) throughout the year. However with regard to hedge trimming bordering non cultivated land - you are reminded that it is an offence under the Wildlife Act 1976 and Wildlife (Amendment) Act 2006 to cut vegetation in a hedge or ditch on lands not cultivated between 1st March and 31st August annually - this is for the protection of nesting birds. Before trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved.

### **Sustainable Waste and Resource Management / Bainistiú Acmhainní agus Dramhaíola Inbhuainithe:**

Well done on your composting area. You mention that it is planned to install recycling bins. What location have you in mind? Recycling is just part of sustainable waste and resource management. Are local children involved in a Green Schools programme at the school they attend? If they are they can be very good sources of information and advice under this category heading, as young people learn in detail how to make progress with regard to sustainable waste and resource management, whilst achieving various stages of the Green Flag award. There are many ways in which you can endeavour to lessen the amount of waste you produce as householders, farms and businesses. You submitted the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource with your entry. Have you considered trying to organise a community Sustainable Waste and Resource Management seminar or talk? Your local authority County Environmental Awareness Officer would be a good person to contact for advice. You could increase your marks in this category as a community by taking on board some of the suggested projects in that publication. We strongly suggest that you choose some simple starting point from the project examples given in that publication, and let us have details for 2016 as to how you have raised awareness, and also as to how you have completed any practical steps to prevent or reduce waste produced across your community.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Well done on your daily litter patrol - that takes effort when you have a small community. We are glad that you get some help from the CE workers. The results are obvious - no litter was encountered. You are also attending to weeds. The green areas were manicured. An amount of loose material - we are unsure as to its exact composition - which you appear to be using in grassed areas as surrounds to trees, flower beds/ poles etc. and clay was stored in

a recessed area just at the cross roads area/Lanesboro road. We wondered if this is community owned. Is this suitable material for purpose? If so can storage be relocated or screened? Attaching signs such as 'Bird Sanctuary' to service poles is not advisable practice. We observed fly posting underneath a L1155 directional sign for Newtowncashel.

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

The housing areas are indeed presented to a very acceptable standard. The entire village is well planned and consistently maintained. The design by Bord na Móna was a good and well planned one - and you have respected this by conserving and maintaining it. Your residents are to be congratulated on the presentation of their houses. Be careful with the erection of hanging baskets. Yours is a rural village and hanging baskets are a more urban form of planting. We would prefer to see you planting more native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers in the soil. This is also more sustainable and better from a water conservation point-of-view. Last year's adjudicator also gave you the same advice and advised you to plant plants that are native and suitable for peaty soil.

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

We see that you hope to have new lighting installed. (You mention it under the Residential category – but it applies to all roads). Good luck with this venture. As you are in a rural location in flat open countryside we would suggest that you look into the possibility of providing lighting that does not cause light pollution. Your local authority might assist you with this. You could actually be a pilot village for considering this issue seriously in any new lighting programme.

You mention new fencing along the Longford approach under the Residential category - but it more rightly belongs here. We did not observe this new fence. In fact the wire in the post and wire fencing as one approaches the crossroads is torn in places. Well done on the re hanging of the gate to the green area. We appreciate the fact that you maintain the approaches as best you can, and we are glad that you get help from your local authority with this work. This help is especially important on the busy main road part of your village from a safety perspective.

On the Newtowncashel Road, the white fence needs paint on the right hand side near the speed limit. We suggest that you paint all field gates (and other gates) in a unifying colour - both in the village and on approach roads. On the Ballymahon Road 2 old farmsteads could be improved – more noticeable as one leaves the village than on entry to the village.

Road markings are generally good, although those on the Newtowncashel Road could be improved. Signage was excellently maintained. Some signs need grass reseeding at their base.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

You are small in numbers but you do not let that deter you. We enjoyed our visit to your unspoilt part of the county on a bright evening. You have wonderful possibilities to engage with your surrounding bog land and we look forward to hearing about your work in the future. Go n-éirí libh!