

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Granard** Ref: **524**  
County: **Longford** Mark: **223**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **15/07/2015**

|   | Maximum<br>Mark | Mark<br>Awarded 2014 | Mark<br>Awarded 2015 |
|---|-----------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning          | 60              | 30                   | 31                   |
| Built Environment and Streetscape         | 50              | 31                   | 33                   |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces               | 50              | 32                   | 33                   |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities  | 50              | 19                   | 19                   |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50              | 10                   | 12                   |
| Tidiness and Litter Control               | 90              | 43                   | 41                   |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas       | 50              | 27                   | 26                   |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes           | 50              | 29                   | 28                   |
| <b>TOTAL MARK</b>                         | <b>450</b>      | <b>221</b>           | <b>223</b>           |

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

Ta Fáilte Romhat Grán Árd! Welcome Granard to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have 12 volunteers. You meet very regularly. Do you meet two evenings per week all year round - as well as an occasional Saturday mornings?

You are assisted by many official and local agencies/bodies and businesses. Your communication methods are both modern and traditional. This is good, as you therefore reach out to all age groups in the community. You give talks at the schools and involve the students in litter picking. We are glad to note that in the approximate 10 years of your entry in the competition that you feel that the community has benefited.

In your entry form you did not number of the projects for this year sequentially as requested in the guidelines to completing the application form. You were also asked to extend this numbering system to your town map. Your map was quite basic. None of your housing estates were marked or named on your map. Some of your projects were shown but not all. You did not show your business estate. Your plan is quite basic and does not indicate as to what the timescale for this plan is. It is a general statement of objectives and also includes past projects. You do not state that the plan is a summary on its title page, but elsewhere in your entry form you say that you attach a summary plan. If this is a summary, please let us have the full document next year. If not we would encourage you to submit a three or five-year Tidy Towns Plan. This will focus your mind on what you can hope to achieve - no matter how simple 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 Granard 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.

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

Your big project this year was the painting of buildings in the town. Thank you for the photographs of the painted buildings. It would have been interesting for the adjudicator if you had sent us 'before' photographs of each building also. Well done to all who participated! We admired the information board on the hotel. This is an important historical connection - especially in relation to the coming year 2016. Neither wildlife habitats nor tree planting are relevant to this category where you have listed them, so we credit them under the following two categories. However painting of the tree guards is part of this category - although you included under the landscaping category. Tree guards are part of your street furniture collection.

On Main Street we admired your modern pavements which set off the buildings to good advantage. Road works had seemingly just been completed on the street. We loved the trees in Main Street. Well done to the bank for coming on board your painting project. Sleeper's Restaurant is idle and needs painting. Another property beside the Bank of

Ireland badly needs painting. Granard Area Action Group premises was clean, but a lot of cluttered signage in the window detracted. John Pettit is a very fine building and was well presented. The Bay Horse/Patrick O' Hara shop front looked very well. It is a pity that uPVC windows have replaced the original timber sash windows at the upper levels John O' Hara is a very simply presented elegant shop front with its bright red paint. The Market House beside the hotel is a great building with wonderful arched elevations. The hotel is also a fine colourful building. We were glad to see an Irish name at Siopa Lus na Gréine. The Post Office looked very well with small - but effective and tasteful signage. There were too many individual small signs on Londis which detracted from an otherwise well-presented premise. Looking up from Main Street we admired the lovely stepping of roofscapes towards the church. This terraced residential area was very well presented and on adjudication day we noticed a resident painting their property on the right-hand side as one approached the church uphill. The cream Moxham Street offices need paint.

On Barrack Street the Resource and Community Centre hanging baskets and window boxes brightened an otherwise bland building. Security fencing between this and the bus depot site would benefit from landscaping. There were a lot of poles and some semi derelict properties on this street. The Credit Union building had a lot of attachments which made it look cluttered. These included five lights, a clock, four window boxes, security cameras, and advertising in the window. The bus depot opposite needed paint to the wall and gate / pillars. The raw security gates and stanchions were rusty. Dunphy's Supervalu looked very well with simple signage overhead and no projecting signage. There is a property very badly in need of paint opposite the Garda Station. The property opposite Tromra Road exit is very poor on both sides of the butcher's premises. Could the windows be cleaned and the posters which are falling down and the curtains fixed at least? The Garda Station was very nice and clean. It is a modern building that fits in well with the streetscape. Well done to the sergeant who organised the repainting of the building for you. There was a good well presented arched entrance with keystone on this street, but painting was required to the side of this.. The auto centre signs need painting.

The Masonic Lodge looked really well just outside the town, and seems to have been conserved recently. We admired its lovely blue paintwork and matching gate – even the gate has detail of the Masonic sign. The Catholic Church looked well on its elevated site, but the Christmas star looks poorly in July! We admired the Pilgrim Path steps and noted the interesting Confession stone. The grotto is in a very naturally landscaped location. But the adjacent laneway to the Motte/National Monument needed cleaning and sweeping. The Church of Ireland nearby was well presented within its good stone walls. 'Granard Road Historic and Scenic Walk' notice nearby was totally decrepit and appeared to serve no function now. The Sports Complex area looked well.

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

You list additional shrub and tree planting as projects under this category heading for this year, but you do not tell us how many shrubs were planted nor what species of shrubs or flowers were planted. Were they native shrubs and flowers? Were they wildflowers? Where did you source them? You mark the locations of the new stone build flower beds on your map, and we had a look at these locations. Well done on the new flower beds! You do not indicate on your map where the new shrubs were planted other than at those flower beds. The same is true of the statement 'additional trees have been planted.' You include this under the Wildlife category but it is pertinent to this category also. We looked out for new tree planting on our visit. We admired the daisies display at a town name sign.

The landscaping at the churches and at the old convent site and at the Sacred Heart school and at its pull-in area was admired. We liked the hard landscaped area beside the Garda Station and wondered about the sculpture - as to its significance - the horses head looked like a chess piece. The local authority sign - near the stone well - beside the Garda Station /Denniston Park junction needs cleaning. This is a nice feature along the street, but is marred by the sign. The window boxes beside the Auto centre on Barrack St. were admired.

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

When you say you are presently developing a wildlife habitat beside the grotto at St Mary's Church you should also let us have any data pertinent to that plan in your possession. We are concerned that this site is very close to the protected archaeological National Monument (Motte) site. What advice have you taken on this aspect of your plans? We would recommend that you discuss your proposals with the County Heritage Officer before you carry out any work or continue to make detailed plans for this site. All may be well, but you need to be guided professionally on this. You tell us that you have added additional bird boxes, but once again you have not show the location of these on your map.

In relation to carrying out further work in relation to raising understanding and awareness of the natural amenities in your area you might consult the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource.

We noticed some incidences of chemical weed killing. We would encourage you to desist as much as possible from weed spraying. Given the size of your town - manual weeding is probably difficult, but there are non chemical methods of weed control which we are sure your County Heritage Officer could discuss with you. Try to keep the chemical spraying to a minimum as it is injurious to the environment.

We observed some hedge cutting on the approach roads. 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 considering trimming any such hedges please consult with your local authority who will deal with this issue if there is a safety aspect involved. Marks are deducted for out of season hedge trimming unless safety issues are flagged and local authority authorisation is present - because of the damage to bird populations.

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

Well done on your rainwater collection system. You might let us have further details of this. Where are the harvesting butts located? Have you any method of auditing what savings you are making with this water conservation programme? We are delighted to know that the schools are involved in the Green Flag programme. We saw 3 flags flying proudly at Sacred Heart School and one at Scoil Mhuire. The students who are involved in this program are a good source of advice to your volunteers. We note that you have purchased a new mower which mulches the grass. The idea of sustainable waste and resource management involves preventing waste at source or at least lessening it considerably at source. We see that you have attended talks about green homes, litter, waste, and energy and water management organised by the local authority's Environmental Awareness Officer. How do you convey what you have learnt to your community? Have you any plans to organise a workshop or demonstration for the community? Some surveys or auditing of progress would help you to see what savings you are making. Have the business community come on-board in any way in relation to this category. Do refer to the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource Management - the updated version sent to you as updated Handbook extract. Perhaps the community might like to get involved in something like the 'Food Waste Challenge' or the Greener Homes programme. You could for instance get some of the community to survey how much food they waste in a week! Check out the [www.foodwaste.ie](http://www.foodwaste.ie) for guidance. What - if any - contacts have you with the Sustainable Energy company in your town?

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

Well done on your sweeping and weeding alongside road kerbs and walls. You also wash road signs, paint flower tubs and seating and power wash walls and buildings. Be careful with power washing and do not power wash any older buildings including stone bridges. Power washing can damage the fabric of such structures. You have been controlling weeds but you do not tell us how. How much is done manually or how much chemical control methods are used? Did you get involved in the annual An Taisce Spring Clean? You keep in contact with your local authority re-illegal dumping. Where is the problem black spot in this regard in your town? Is it on the approach roads?

At Barrack Street there was fly posting for a local fundraising road. A rusty upper level high hanging sign at Auto premises looked poorly. A post-box on Barrack Street near the school was rusting.

You did not show your Business Park (Harp Business Park) off Barrack Street on your map. We were extremely disappointed in the presentation of this estate which has many weedy areas. The semi-mature trees at the top of this estate were surrounded by long grass. There are some extremely ugly security railings which would benefit from landscaping in the estate. Some broken windows in some of the buildings added to the seeming abandonment of the area. Air Synergy Solar Power and its windmills looked clean and presentable. One redeeming feature was the nice stone wall in the estate. There were temporary railings and untidy curtilages. There are lovely views from the estate, but the estate itself is in a very bad state of care. We would strongly urge to make the cleaning and tidying of this estate a priority project for 2016. We hope that when next year's adjudicator visits they will see a vast improvement.

There is another very poorly presented around the Lough Gowna road junction. A very poor entrance area with barbed wire and rusty gates, together with raw security fencing looked very poorly. At the junction cabs in a corner site require screening. Green security railings at the entrance area also required screening. The old Fire Station has deteriorated and the terrace next-door looked poorly. The bakery sites need some tidying and screening.

At the top of Market Street (?) some properties needed upgrading. A nice building at the end/stop of the street was for sale. However this building has lost its timber framed windows to uPVC inserts. The Hill/Community childcare sign was faded. There was an empty projecting sign holder over the Granard Inn, and some buildings had redundant hanging basket brackets.

Signage at the Bring banks was dirty and the area around the banks needed sweeping. There was some litter around the rusting pink clothes bank and a blue plastic and a blue metal object nearby appeared redundant to the purposes of the banks. The area in front of the banks has a poor surface, and generally the entire complex needs upgrading and brightening. An extremely dirty wall and poop scoop standard near the Lisryan junction area looked very poorly. The Harp sculpture is sited in nice grass, but across the road there are a series of ugly power line poles.

You do not fill us in on your regular litter control approach - other than to say that the schoolchildren help. It is important to have a plan in place. Please tell us about how you deal with litter - about your rotas - the frequency of litter picks etc. next year. We found quite an amount of litter in places on approach roads and in estates - which we detail under those category headings.

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

Whereas individual house presentation was reasonable generally we found some serious issues in estates. The adjudicator found the sentence "In the draft plan for Granard it is the intention of Longford county council to regenerate Colmcille and Redmond Terrace" to be probably the most important statement in your entry form because on visiting these housing estates the adjudicator was quite shocked. Several of the houses are boarded up and several are in a very poor state of presentation. A vacant site along this Colmcille estate area was overgrown. This area is probably the worst presented residential area the adjudicator has seen in many years. This is not your fault, but we would urge you to lobby to move this regeneration programme on as quickly as possible. These houses are on an approach road to the town and create a dreadful impression to your visitor arriving from the Lough Gowna direction. We also have huge sympathy for the residents who are making such an effort to keep their properties in such good condition in such appalling surroundings. We particularly noticed houses such as number 11 - a really well maintained property and garden - in the midst of the estate - and have untold admiration for the owners/occupants. They are shining examples of how people can transcend problems through sheer good will and determination. We hope that they are on your volunteer list - as they would make excellent workers.

Trumra road is not shown on your map - just as none of the housing estates are. Nonetheless we visited this road and admired the new stone sign, new trees, and new tree grilles. Despite its excellent regeneration we observed quite an amount of litter which was disappointing. The site curtilage of Supervalu bounds one entrance to this estate, and we complement Supervalu on the tidy nature of their presentation of this side curtilage.

You say that residents associations have been set up in housing estates. Does this apply to all housing estates or only some? Grass cutting upkeep, planting of shrubs and flowers etc. appears to be done by your volunteers - we hope that you get help from the local residents.

At the entrance area to Cnoc na Gréine the entrance pillars and boundary walls would benefit from painting. We observed some pieces of litter at this entrance area and also across the road at this point. The apartment block across the road had an 'apartments for sale' sign on the gable facing the approach. This signage should be removed or cleaned. The kerbs around the apartment area were a bit weedy, and the inner open space area was very overgrown. Here too we noticed some houses in need of painting- with satellite dishes on the front of the houses which looked poorly. There was a very large amount of litter in the corner of the car park attached to the apartments - which litter accumulation was visible from the public road. There was also some graffiti on the apartment building. A very weedy bed along the car park edge also detracted from this area.

At the housing estate opposite Scoil Phadraig we would suggest that you planted in the soil rather than in the white synthetic planters. This estate appears to have no name on the ground but was presented neatly. We admired the nice terrace on the Lanesborough road called Parnell Row. A housing estate on the Lisryan road had a 'stop' sign which was bent. This housing estate had no name but was presented neatly. The wall at the back of the estate was stained with iron oxide and needed cleaning.

This terraced residential area on the hill to the churches was very well presented and on adjudication day we noticed a resident painting their property (on the right-hand side as one approached the churches uphill).

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

You state under this category heading that you hope to undertake the repair of stone walls, and painting of gates to public areas. As this is a future proposal it should form part of your plan and not be listed as a project undertaken for this year. We note that you are keeping hedges trimmed. Please see our comments in this regard under Wildlife.

On the Ballyjamesduff road we noticed a headless double pole near the 60 K pH speed limit sign and some arrow road signs needed cleaning, as did a T junction sign (as one approached nice suburban gardens and well cut open space with stone beds). There are nice uninterrupted views towards the town from this road. In places this view was marred by nettle growth protruding above the stone wall. We observed a broken concrete post and wire fence which looked poorly opposite the Abbeylara Garden Centre sign. This detracted from the lovely planted shrub area facing the Abbeylara junction. This shrub area with its delightful honeysuckle-enclosed seat looked really well. The concrete pots under the directional sign at the same junction are unnecessary and planting in the soil here would be preferable. Advertising sign for two events were fly posted nearby. An advertising sign for the local hotel was noted near the town. We would suggest that on this approach road - as on all approach roads you consider painting field gates in a uniform colour. On this approach we noticed some hedge cutting of recent origin. Please refer to our comments under Wildlife. The sludge removal site would benefit from the painting of its boundary wall. Beyond this site we admired the nice row of semi mature trees on the roadside. Some dead branches at this point needed removal. Opposite this grove there were some nice grassy banks, and a nicely mown grassed area to the roadside at the black and white Granard sign. We question the necessity for having more than one village sign on any approach road. We consider that this can lead to a cluttered look. A few pieces of litter were observed on the margins of this road. Beyond the apartment block on the left-hand side - the final approach to the town was very neat and tidy. A 'caution children crossing' sign at the approach to the road junction has very rusty upright poles. A minor road from Abbeylara joins the Ballyjamesduff road. This road approach is pleasant, but we spotted some hedge trimming of recent origin here. Once again field gates need painting, and we also saw a small sprinkling of litter along this road. We admired the new stone beds at the blue Granard signs

On the Cavan road approach there were broken traffic yellow/black signs at the 5123 junction. We observed fly posting on the fence, and a broken traffic pole beside the L5123 sign. This is a lovely approach with trees and

simple green edging. Some fly posting was observed once again for local events. Further hedge cutting of recent origin was noted. The footpaths on both sides of this approach were very weed-free and admired. The Cnoc Mhuire school was set off by a nice green grass sward in views from this approach. The Green Flag at the school was a little frayed. We admired the boulder 'Our Greener School – Making a Difference' at the school. There was a lot of free standing incidental signage clutter at the garage at the junction of the Cavan and Ballyjamesduff roads. On Barrack Street we admired the fine stone wall and entrance to Smith's Funeral Home (old convent).

The Lough Gowna approach is very rural, but we observed some recent hedge cutting here also. The approach is through the very poor housing area referred to under the earlier category. The 80/50 speed limit sign was turned the wrong way around. And we noticed quite a lot of litter which appears to have been left behind after hedge cutting. The blue Granard sign here was surrounded by lovely oxeye daisies. The 'caution children' sign was dirty.

On the Longford approach the stone bridge at LDR194-01100 appears to have been repaired with cement instead of lime mortar. The Granard sign looked very well again surrounded by oxeye daisies. Kiernan Milling was very well presented. Could the security railings in view from the road be planted? There were good grass margins near the 60 K pH sign. The second Kiernan premise was also well presented, and we admired Kate's cottage. Beyond Kate's cottage a business premises with the gable facing the road had dirty ochre-coloured boundary walls. Reilly Cakes required painting, and we noticed weedy footpaths on the right-hand side - and some more litter along a concrete block wall. At the 50 K pH sign the 'caution children crossing' sign needed repair. There was a closed-up house at this point, where weed killer appears to have been used in the garden. The school Árdcoil Phadraig was well landscaped, but we saw no flag on the flagpoles. There was a rusty crossroads sign opposite the school.

We drove out as far as the cemetery the 'forecourt' of which was nicely set out with neatly marked parking and with well-trimmed grass 'islands.'

On the Lanesborough road approach we admired a nice grey old barn/shed as one approaches the corner of Main Street, but the shed adjacent needs painting. There was a poor weedy entrance on the left-hand side behind the mono pitch buildings behind the Texaco garage. There was some litter outside the Mart. The Mart site would benefit from some roadside landscaping. The curtilage and general presentation of the Makool building was poor. The boundary walls outside the Enterprise Building need repainting.

On the Lisryan road there were some dirty boundary walls, and on adjudication day hedge cutting was in progress. We again refer to our comments under Wildlife. The verges along this approach were neat, and the blue town sign had nice planting. The well at the road edge near the town sign included a pipe which did not look attractive in the context of the well. Along this road there were some nice suburban type gardens. The 80K pH sign was turned.

Road works had just been completed in Main Street so we ignored the fact that some of the bollards and road markings were dirty on this visit.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Granard has made great strides with improving the appearance of its built environment and the Main Street has some fine buildings. You have some work to do on the approaches, and we also hope that the local authority will be able to continue the work which they have started in upgrading local authority housing estates. We wish you well. Go n-éirí libh!