

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mullinalaghta** Ref: **362**  
County: **Longford** Mark: **232**  
Category: **A** Date(s): **21/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	32	31
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	29	31
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	30	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	24	25
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	24	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	28	27
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>232</b>

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

Ta Fáilte Romhat Muilleán na Leachta! Welcome Mullinalaghta to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have a well organised core committee - with another 20 people - including Foróige members - involved. You meet monthly and you organise your Spring Clean event with the Foróige and local GAA club. Your list of agencies, bodies and businesses that have supported your activities is very impressive. Your group text system is effective, you use local media, and are about to set up a Facebook page. You are good communicators. One of the committee members is the principal of the local school and this leads to greater cooperation between your committee and the school. Thank you for your comprehensive entry including the village area enhancement plan for your village. However this is dated 2012 as you honestly point out. Some of the projects suggested have been carried out, but there are others still awaiting execution. The action plan for delivery does not appear to put a date on any of the project time scale. It is time now to draw up a new focused Tidy Towns plan for the village. We would suggest that you use the category headings in the entry form/adjudication report as the basis for this plan to be focused on your Tidy Towns work in particular. A three or five-year plan will focus your mind on what you can hope to achieve - no matter how simple a plan it is. Only include what you feel you can achieve in the time scale chosen for this plan. 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 Mullinalaghta in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a plan. You can also glean much advice from the 2012 plan in your possession. As you say yourselves the motto continues to be "Keep up the good work"! 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. In fact not having a plan leads to loss of marks in this category. Thank you for the additional information in the folder attached to your entry. Thank you for the Derrycasson Wood project copy. This is not dated but we understand from your submission (and the adjudicator's report from last year) that this was carried out in 2014 and was submitted with last year's entry.

We found your map to be helpful, and, as requested you numbered the projects which you wanted the adjudicator to see - although the projects were not numbered sequentially through the entry form as requested in the guidelines - this map was still useful to the adjudicator. You have been entering the competition for over 20 years. You say that it encourages the community to have pride in their place. We are glad to hear that.

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

You continue to upgrade the facilities at the community centre. Nonetheless we felt that the gable facing the church (with the name sign attached) needs repainting, as well as improvement of the flat 'porch' roof over the door. The white painted boundary wall - block wall - facing the church also needs repainting. Verge side improvements near Keogh's public house improve its setting. Perhaps it was daytime closing, but the blinds were down in the pub which

made it look a little bit 'sad' or closed up. The signage on the pub was simple and attractive. The area with the defunct petro; pump beside the Angler's Rest could be improved – as also mentioned by last year's adjudicator. You maintain the stone walls in the village. We were most impressed with your magnificent village church. We were quite curious in relation to the design - which to us resembled very much the early Christian Irish Celtic church design with its inclined walls (called 'battered' walls) steep roof, and finial type roof edges to the front. The only information we could find out (from your village information board) was that this church was built from the stone from another building. There was no indication as to whether our idea about its inspiration from early Christian Celtic church architecture was correct or not. As the church was closed we were unable to find out any more in relation to the architect's name or inspiration for this most interesting building. Hopefully we will find out sometime! The church was beautifully maintained in excellent grounds, and there were lovely views to the surrounding undulating countryside from the height on which it is built. The church gate is also exceptionally nice. We also very much admired the lovely gates at the graveyard. You appear to have a good tradition of gate design in the village, and this is echoed in modern times by the new school gate. The graveyard itself was very well presented. The Post Office looked extremely well with its nice Irish name sign. We complement the owners on not attaching unnecessary signage to the Post Office. It looked elegant in its classical simplicity. The large primary school, on a hill near the Post Office, was very neat and we admired its good modern gate.

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

Well done on the great interest you have taken in Derrycasson wood. It is indeed a very important part of your community, and you can be proud of this 'beautiful facility'. Well done to Coillte also for their cooperation with you and with the Rural Social Scheme workers. Thank you for the Longford Tourism map which you sent us. The wood figures largely in the North Eastern part of your county on that map. It is in no small way thanks to your interest and work that this has become part of the North Longford Tour. We note that you send delegates to the Longford Tourism community meetings and you are ready to facilitate any tours or nature trail walks. This is innovative and admirable.

You maintain the areas around the GAA clubroom, community gym, and the community walkway. We admired the boxwood lettering at the GAA grounds which you completed last year. Well done on obtaining trees during National Tree week. The continued maintenance and upkeep of the church grounds and Millennium Park are to your credit. You have limited the planting of hanging baskets and flower boxes - which is good - as yours is a well naturally landscaped rural village and does not need ornamentation. Sustainable planting in the soil of native trees and shrubs is the way to go. You also look after the rockery at the cemetery and the flower bed at the school. We admired the nice montbretia in the dry stone bed near the school. We liked the bog oak and boulders on the landscaped area in this vicinity also.

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

Well done to the schoolchildren who carried out the project last year on the history and wildlife of Derrycasson wood. We see that you have provided the walkway near the GAA pitch and adjacent to the wood with lighting. The lighting of the woodland walkway makes it safer for walking. We wonder if you took any advice on the effect this lighting might have on the wildlife in the immediate area and on the issue of light pollution. We also visited Fitzpatrick Lake Shore and stopped awhile to admire the tranquil water. You are lucky to have such amenities in your area. We are sure that you will, in time, look into the resources to be surveyed and presented to the public in relation to the lake area also. In this regard we were delighted to see the woodland brochure with the accompanying map – a result of the childrens' study. Is this readily available to visitors to your village? Would it be possible perhaps to leave some of these leaflets in a purpose-built small box at the entrance to the woods? Or perhaps they could be made available locally in a shop or at the Post Office. Perhaps they are already included in the Longford tourism app. We downloaded this app during our visit to your county, and found it very interesting, but did not have time to peruse it in full detail. So maybe you are already there!

We noticed a lot of hedge cutting on the Granard approach. Whereas it was mainly lateral hedge cutting there were also areas where the tops of the hedges had been lopped. Some verges near the village would benefit from additional trimming, whilst leaving a tall grass corridor adjacent to the hedge for wildlife. 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. Perhaps you could get the schoolchildren involved in some focussed wildlife research project. You might read 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. Your County Heritage Officer would be a good contact in relation to ideas to make progress on in this category.

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

Well done also to the school on obtaining their first Green Flag and are now working towards their second. 'Sustainable Energy' is the topic of the moment for the schoolchildren, and we hope that they are transmitting their knowledge to the population at large. Well done on researching various websites as recommended by last year's adjudicator. Your short survey on recycling brought up some interesting results which you hope to follow up with work on the results. Thank you for the copies of the form and a sample of some of the completed surveys. Well done to the children who dispersed the survey to all households on behalf of the Tidy Towns committee. We are

glad to hear that you have made contact with the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority, who is going to visit you. When you have your Facebook page in operation you also plan to use it to convey good practice ideas. You seem to have got the message that sustainable waste and resource management is about more than recycling. Do study the Tidy Towns publication in relation to Sustainable Waste and Resource Management - the updated version sent to you as updated handbook extract. We saw your solar powered school sign.

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

Mullinalaghta is a village which is quite linear, so it must be difficult for you therefore to keep an eye on tidiness and litter control issues throughout the community. But you are doing well. There are some issues which we would draw your attention to. The wall at the corner opposite Keogh's pub needs repair. A length of timber fencing fronting the recessed house on the Granard approach would benefit from planting. We noticed a broken and rusty field gate in the village which looked poorly. At the GAA signage there were two plastic bottles thrown in the recessed space. There were also three empty flagpoles at the GAA site which looked poorly and one was rusting. A five-year-old planning notice was observed at the junction near the Anglers Rest. It is past time to have this removed. The site curtilage on the junction side of the Anglers Rest needs tidying or full screening. A grey convex roofed shed near the graveyard would benefit from wall planting. There were two fly posts on one metal pole outside the church and another on a second pole outside the church. Another fly post was noted on a metal pole beside the wishing well sign on the Lakeshore approach. And, disappointingly there was a fly post attached to a tree on the entrance to the walkway near the GAA. The striped barrier at this location requires repainting. An empty hanging basket on a wooden utility pole near the graveyard should be removed carefully. It is not a good idea to attach such to utility poles. Well done to the schoolchildren who took part in the Spring Clean in April. They set the standards with their work on the cemetery area for the adults who followed suit in May on more general areas. Smaller groups conduct weekly litter picks. Whereas you mention the painting of the chain and post fencing near the cemetery under Built environment -we credit it here under Tidiness where it really belongs. As with all villages in County Longford - the information board provided by the local authority is interesting but now has need of renewal - due to fading. It is nicely located in a stone bed under trees - near the community centre. The Fitzpatrick Shore sign at this location is tiny and substandard. Would you consider applying to have a conventional directional sign located here for the future?

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

The standard of house presentation in the village is generally good, and you have been saved the scourge of unfinished housing estates and abandoned derelict properties. On adjudication day we noticed a property owner busily painting their house near the school. It is always a good sign to see inhabitants looking after their own properties. The maintenance of household entrances is mentioned under Built Environment but we credited here under residential.

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

The blue village sign on the Granard approach was admired with its hedged background and raised stone bed with flowers. However, the white wall to the left of the sign - as one approaches - needs repainting. Delightful shrubbery leads inwards past a very well presented house on the right-hand side. This adjudicator considered the 'wishing well' sign beyond this house to be a little bit ' twee', but this is a personal opinion. The same comment applies to the identical wishing well sign on the Lakeshore approach - although we like the 'Slán agus Beannacht' message. However is it really necessary to have two village signs in such close proximity to each other? Such can cause a cluttered effect.

You mow, strim hedges, and grass on all approach roads to the village. But you have to be careful about cutting or strimming hedges at certain times of the year as we have discussed above. We have already referred to the hedge cutting on the Granard approach, but we also saw some further hedge cutting on the approach from the lake.

Some road drainage has taken place at Keogh's and near the Community Centre - which has helped to improve the road verges in these areas. There were quite a number of 'headless'/signless road traffic poles in and around the village. One of these was near the timber fenced recessed house on the Granard approach. Another was noted at the Anglers Rest junction. Yet another 'headless' 80 K PH pole was observed, as one exited from the village near the Anglers Rest along the minor road. Yet another was seen on the way to the school on the right-hand side approaching the school. Another 'headless' speed limit sign on the Post Office approach to the village was noted. There were three 'headless' poles at the Lakeshore! One schools sign was dirty. A children crossing sign was somewhat obscured by vegetation.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

You acknowledge the place of the adjudicators' reports in giving praise where it is due and identifying areas of further improvement. We hope that you find this year's report constructive and helpful. We enjoyed our visit to your village in its many different areas and hope that you enjoy continuing with your good work. Go n-éirí libh!