

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tagshinny** Ref: **486**
County: **Longford** Mark: **221**
Category: **A** Date(s): **19/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	26	27
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	26	27
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	29	31
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	17	18
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	22	25
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	29	30
TOTAL MARK	450	206	221

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Teach Since/Teachí Siní! (We noted that two village name signs on approach roads differ in their Irish spelling of your name.) In any event welcome Taghshinny to the Super Valu 2015 National Tidy Towns competition. You have the assistance of your local C.E. Scheme and the local National School. We are sure that there are others who either help you at present - or would be anxious to lend you assistance in the future. Last year's adjudicator asked you if the local authority gave support to your group. Under the Sustainable Waste and Resource Management Section of your Entry you indicate that you do avail of the local authority's Environmental Awareness Officer's support (as detailed in the school's letter) and the help of the Litter Warden. We imagine that you also avail of other local authority advice and funding. Perhaps you can fill us in on this next year. Please let us know of any other agencies, bodies, and businesses that may support your activities during the coming year in your 2016 submission.

We note that you meet regularly and this face-to-face communication is vital. However, we would suggest that you consider adding some modern instant methods of communication which are sustainable and appeal to the younger generation - such as texting and Facebook. We are delighted that the school is involved in the 'National Clean Week' planting. We are glad that entering the competition over the last nine years has helped the community to keep the village tidy and clean.

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 concise 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 Taghshinny 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.

We would like to see some Irish in use in the village - even in a small way.

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

Well done on encouraging owners to maintain their properties. Your encouragement is having effect. Your school looked very well on adjudication day. We were sorry to see that your village public house has closed, as it is an integral part of the village built environment - as well as obviously an integral part of your community. We understand how difficult it is to upgrade a business which has been closed. However the neglected areas on either side of the building - especially the black fencing on the school side add to the abandoned impression of the immediate area. Perhaps you may be able to obtain permission to remove or upgrade the rusting signage, disused bracket, and disused petrol pump – even if you are not in a position to upgrade the appearance of the building itself. Could the black railings be painted? Likewise with the abandoned two-storey house forming an integral part of your village green. It is sad to see slates missing and windows boarded up. Is there any chance you could obtain permission to even repaint the white plinth?

You have an interesting building in the Protected Structure that is the Church of Ireland - and we were very pleased to see that it was being maintained on adjudication day. Although we do not adjudicate on building interiors, we could not resist the temptation to visit the church as it was open. Well done to the people involved in the ongoing care of this building. We particularly admired the interesting sculpture/Memorial by the Dutch sculptor who has also we believe sculpted an important Memorial in Waterford church of Ireland cathedral. We noted the graveyard survey information board located outside the church. Perhaps this survey could be expanded to detail the interesting archaeological heritage of the gravestones and their inscriptions. Perhaps you could talk to your County Architectural Conservation Officer in relation to providing an appropriate interpretive sign for this building (and the important sculpture) which is beautifully set in the unspoiled village green/triangle.

Could the corrugated shed roof opposite the church (beside the beautifully presented four bay two-storey house) be painted for 2016? We commend the owners of this house and the owners of the ochre coloured house between the church and the bridge with its lovely red door and window paint. The national school pupils have completed a project on the old school and the church. We would be most interested in seeing the results of this project next year.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Tagshinny is a lovely small village located in rich agricultural hinterland. We salute you for the way in which you have respected this classical simplicity in maintaining the lovely native mature planting throughout the village. You have resisted the temptation to 'prettify' your village through injudicious formal or fussy landscaping. However, in the longer term it is important to renew landscaping insofar as you will need to plan for the future by providing native semi mature trees and native shrubs for your village to augment and provide for eventual life spans of existing vegetation. The village green - triangular in shape - is a very important focal point from a landscaping prospective and you have conserved its integrity and maintained its grass and border trees and shrubs. The local traditional of stonewalling is part of your landscape and we encourage you to ensure that any new walls are of dry stone construction - with lime mortar where mortar is necessary. The hard landscaping - new paving and existing footpaths all add up to a good centre village environment. There is no need for additional planting out of the soil. Planting in the soil is more sustainable and visually much more attractive and appropriate to your village. You have taken on board last year's adjudicator's advice in relation to removing planting from pots to the soil.

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

We were very conscious of birdsong throughout your peaceful village. Have you considered how you might 'harness' this resource and present it to the public/visitor?

The National School students are investigating the Royal Canal in terms of - inter alia, flora and fauna. Their work on food webs and food chains is an interesting biodiversity project and we are glad to note that they undertake nature walks. Their letter tells us about their vegetable and fruit planting. We note that they regularly examine the bug hotel is to investigate any new arrivals. Have you a list of the existing inhabitants and new visitors? Provision of access to natural amenities is also very important, and we need to see the results of your surveys/interpretation. We suggest that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to move forward with such plans. You should also 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.

You mention that you encourage owners of derelict properties to spray weed killer in the vicinity. Spraying weed killer is not advised from an environmental point of view. You have a small village, so try to deal with weeding manually or talk to your County Heritage Officer about environmentally friendly weed killing methods.

We observed what appeared to be fairly recent hedge trimming around the junction of the Ballymahon approach road with the junction of road L5207 - as well as on the approach road L5207 itself. 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. 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 Inbhuanaithe:

We are glad to see that the school is involved in the Green Schools Programme. Well done to the school for collecting rainwater in three water butts. Compost is also provided by the schoolchildren. Another project of relevance to this category is the junk art project. Thank you for the photographs of the ensuing art

works. A submission from a student tells us that they cycle to school every year once - perhaps this could be increased to twice! We would like to hear a little more about what the older people do in relation to sustainable waste and resource management. The visit of the Environmental Awareness Officer and the recycling magician will encourage the students into more work in this area. You could get some of the community to survey how much food they waste in a week! Check out the 'Food Waste Challenge' on www.foodwaste.ie for guidance. Promoting waste prevention ideas and initiatives is a big part of the Tidy Towns Groups' role in this category. Can you tell us how you will communicate all the good school practice to the broader community?

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

On adjudication day it was noted that the village was being carefully tended to/swept by one of your workers - possibly from the CE scheme. Well done on his meticulous care and attention to detail. The schoolchildren are involved with the annual spring clean and litter picking.

White railings set at a 90° angle to the village street on the Ballymahon approach would benefit from painting. On the opposite side of the road surfacing of a rough area adjacent to the new footpath paving - and painting of nearby walls would improve first impressions arriving from Ballymahon. The same can be said about the adjacent worn green corrugated gate. Can anything be done to brighten the recessed rectangular area on the Ballymahon side of the closed pub? Road markings through the village could be repainted. Some dead branches were noted in a planted area close to the bridge.

We noted a bed and breakfast fly post on one pole at the junction near the school - at the junction L5203 near the bridge. Torn bunting on a pole near the public house should be removed carefully and safely. A plastic tie - possibly from an election poster was still in situ on a pole near the abandoned house on the village green. Otherwise the village was litter-free.

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

The standard of house presentation in the village and on the immediate approaches is very good. Quite obviously there is a great sense of 'pride of place'. You have been saved the 'scourge' of unfinished estates.

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

The Ballymahon approach road is very attractive - leafy and green and very well cared for. We particularly admired the classically simple location of the blue village sign on this approach. It is set in a well tended grass verge without fuss or ornament. We encourage this tasteful arrangement. In a rural village it is not necessary to decorate the natural environment with fussy planting or additional stone enclosures - where there is already a simple attractive good stone wall. Nearer the village we loved the contrast of the copper beech semi mature trees with the surrounding green grass and other deciduous trees. The verges along all approach roads were neatly trimmed. A few dead branches in a field opposite the L5207 approach/by the side of the Ballymahon approach needed to be removed.

On approach road L 5207 the 50 Kph speed limit sign was partially obscured by vegetation. Perhaps you might consider having the upright poles on the speed limit signs painted in black and white striping to match the upright poles on the village signs on L5207 approach road and the striped uprights on the Tenelick approach road signs also. (Striped plastic sleeves can be purchased if so wished to save on signage maintenance.)

A field gate and sheds on the Ballymahon approach could benefit from painting. In general we would highly recommend that you consider painting all field gates on approach roads in a uniform colour. The road traffic signs were generally very freshly painted and admired.

We admired the very good timber fencing and semi mature trees at Glebe House on the Colehill approach road.

The 'caution children crossing' sign on the Colehill road still needs attention insofar as the figures are faded. Last year's adjudicator also referred to this sign and its need for attention.

Concluding Remarks:

We have great hope for your future when we read some of your students Tidy Towns comments - "We love doing tidying in our school village Taghshinny" and "We helped some of the residents of Tasghshinny village plant some flowers.... it was lots of fun!" The photographs of the children helping to keep their village looking well are very encouraging and cheerful. We wish you continued success. Go n-éirí libh!