

# Tidy Towns Competition 2015

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Drogheda** Ref: **491**  
County: **Louth** Mark: **307**  
Category: **H** Date(s): **17/06/2015**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2014</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	52	53
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	41	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	53	54
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>307</b>

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

Drogheda is welcomed to the Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition for 2015.

Thank you for the very comprehensive application which included pictorial records of activities under the various headings.

Quite a lot of input has been included in the 45 plus page application and while the adjudicator will judge with fairness and impartiality it may not be possible to condense everything motioned into a two/three page document which is the norm for Tidy Towns Reports.

At this point the adjudicator would like to thank the committee for the very positive sentiments expressed via the Chairperson in the conclusion section of the entry form

It's been quite a few years since this adjudicator visited this fine town that's steeped in history and that has such a rich architectural heritage so it was a very pleasant experience to traverse the town on foot during the adjudication process.

Just to get one or two negatives out of the way before doing report proper.

The map supplied was slightly ineffective as whilst it detailed the designated work areas to be visited it was short on detail of the town centre; it seems that the town has no designated map that can be obtained from the Tourist Information Office or the County Council Offices.

Fortunately the adjudicator was able to access a map of Drogheda from an Aldi sponsored Collins Ireland Atlas.

It would be a suggestion if one of the Committee got hold of this and produced a suitable map of substance for the town centre and immediate surrounds and have it available for next years competition.

This particular section places great emphasis on the quality of entry form and on the level of cooperation between the greater Drogheda Community, Both Local Authorities, Garda Síochána other agencies that deal with business development, social inclusion, health and employment in the town not forgetting the educators.

You pass this test with flying colours

The adjudicator noted that you have 22 active partners that support your endeavours to keep Drogheda to the forefront of Tidy Towns in the county and indeed in the North East Region.

Methods of communicating your message to the town population are varied and innovative from the old reliable word of mouth, various notices and the many and ubiquitous forms of social media.

Good to note that you have an active input into the boundary review and that this has been conveyed in strong terms to the relevant minister.

This could decide whether one is eligible to play for Meath or Louth nothing exercises the mind like GAA loyalties!

You are wished well in your quest for a "joined up thinking" approach to the overall process!

Youth Involvement in a town as large as Drogheda is very important and having a Volunteer Schools Liaison Officer available to coordinate matters is very progressive thinking.

Yes you are quite correct in stating that urban centres need a more comprehensive vision and political will to get thing done.

In this regard I would say that you as a collective committee you are very much to the fore in ensuring that issues are constantly highlighted and directed to the relevant authorities.  
The three "our" gives the reader a snap shot of the what Drogheda is about and indeed this adjudicator wasn't aware that Drogheda is indeed the largest town in Ireland but not necessarily in County Louth ! A Quiz questions no doubt!  
Overall an excellent and comprehensive input under Community Involvement and Planning.

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

As stated in the previous section Drogheda is a walled town steeped in history and one can become exercised very much by this history and get slightly disconnected with the main task in hand that of adjudication!  
The story of Scarlett Street was particularly interesting if not a little gory, other places of historical interest that appealed to the adjudicator were the Sienna Convent, Cord Graveyard, Millmount Museum and Tower, Highlanes Art Gallery, St Peters Church of Ireland and the Corn Exchange.  
One needs to come back for a historical/leisure visit to absorb more of the history of the town  
It is good to note that Louth Heritage and Conservation Officers are working jointly in a practical manner to protect the Town Walls and hopefully funding will ensue to hire a conservation architect cum engineer.  
The Boyneside Trail project is indeed well signposted within the core area of the town and the adjudicator took off and did a fast walk through part of the trail.  
Whilst on the issue of signage it would be worthwhile of the Tidy Towns Committee would engage with the relevant authority to improve the exit/destination signage within the town centre.  
It is rather confusing for an outsider to find here is no sign to indicate exits to the M1 from the centre of town.  
The following are a number of commercial properties that appealed to the adjudicator for the manner in which they were presented Garveys Public House Scarlett Street beautifully maintained premises with name engraved on windows, Cottage Pharmacy same area.  
McHugh's Bar and Off Licence on Cord Road has a nice easy on the eye frontage, Peter Matthews (McPhails) old style pub but front needs to be re varnished old style to really make it stand out.  
Gleeson's Bar 64 West Street looks as if it has recently being repainted in a very attractive colour combination and was adorned with colourful hanging baskets.  
The owners of Cagney's Bar and Paula Moore Solicitors side by side on Dyer Street deserve credit for the overall presentation of both properties  
Drogheda Credit Union based in the very historical Clarke House was extremely well presented  
The three main Shopping Centres within the town core area were in the main very tidy and accessible with good facilities for people.  
Public Buildings were kept in a well preserved manner and credit is due to the people entrusted with the task of looking after them.  
Space does not allow individual comment on all churches and schools in the town and surrounds but most were visited and it was noticeable that all were clean and again credit is due to caretakers and maintenance personnel tasked with their up keep.  
Just an aside is St Marys still a diocesan college?  
Nothing can explain the mindless mentality that resulted in 100 windows being smashed at St Oliver Plunkett Community School a few days back.  
Good to note the banner "support4older people" banner on the Haymarket Development  
Dereliction and unoccupied properties falling into decline is something that all towns and villages encounter.  
Drogheda has a few prominent black spots on St Laurence Street near Highlanes Gallery and on junction of Trinity Street and West Street where some very prominent properties are now falling into decline  
Too many plastic and garish signs also noted in the core area of the town.  
Overall the standard in this section was quite good.

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

A very straightforward input of what's done and what's planned in this section and it was noticeable that you took the very practical approach of attend to basics of manage what's in place whilst being realistic in your approach to work undertaken in the last year.  
Too many committees take on initiatives in this category that necessitate ongoing looking after and often find that they don't have resources do the needful over time.  
My favourite phrase "less is often more" comes to mind.  
One presumes that you have an excellent relationship with the 5 people from Louth County Council who are entrusted with the task of looking after the towns landscaping needs.  
Nice planning tubs in the West Street and also very effective tubs at the junction of Magdalene Street and Magdalene Street upper.  
A very nice tiered floral arrangement was observed at St Augustine's Church  
Some lovely arrangements on the Bridge of Peace including the old annual reliables blue trailing lobelia.  
The construction of the new skateboard facility on the river bank as one goes down towards Haymarket Bridge was in full swing and this will be some attraction when completed.  
The hanging baskets in the core area were very effective and well appointed but some of the large planters (tubs) need to be reinvigorated with a combination of additional colour or standard shrubs such as euonymus, spirea or berberis depending on suitability.  
The Christmas tree initiative is a novel one and top marks to the council personnel.  
The work of the gateway team was noted at the various entrances and the adjudicator was prudent enough to abandon car and walk to observe at close quarters.

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

An interesting introduction to this section and one which this adjudicator would concur with in principle. It would be a very interesting exercise to gauge the effect on wildlife habitats where varying forms of wildlife information signs are prominent.

Do they create problems or are they necessary to promote the fact that an area is rich in wildlife.

This adjudicator would rather leave it to a wildlife enthusiast or local wildlife ranger to make that call.

The paragraph on urban roosts is a very interesting one also and something that is often missed by people who are possibly pre occupied with modern living and haven't time to watch the birds or smell the roses – mores the pity.

Just a comment on the flocking starlings who are omnivores “all eaters” because of the variety of their diet, they are very attractive to watch in formation but can become a bit of a nuisance if they get into ones garage roof – I speak from experience.

The constraints of getting the overall report into a concise 2 page document doesn't allow one to do full justice to your input in this category.

The excellent detail and commonsense approach to wildlife its habitats and natural amenities under the following Unusual Residents/Visitors, Wildlife Champions, Wildlife Awareness in the Community, Conservation and Data Capture Locally, Bird Watching Reserve and both Amenity Walking, Cycling, River and Art merits an increase of two marks and serves as an example of what proper practice in this category is about.

Now all one needs is a few bottles of Dan Kelly's Cider

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

This is a category that has under, a slightly different heading in past years, created problems of interpretation for many centres with the result that many did not avail of the marks that could be obtained.

The emphasis is on prevention rather than just management/minimisation of waste.

Louth certainly has come up with some rather new concepts within the Tidy Towns in the county.

Junk Kouture is a new one on this adjudicator but on reading the paragraph it relates to Trashion Fashion which seems to be the new buzz idea –inventiveness at its best!

Anything that can get the creative instincts of school children of all ages working is a winner and will filter through to the community by getting parents, teachers and others offering encouragement.

Jole Rider Bikes for Africa a very good idea but has been seen in other areas of the country.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland has many programmes of scale that can be rolled out to communities to help reduce energy consumption.

Let's hope that these interns do indeed get the proper training and support from the SEAI and are valued for their work and I'm sure they will

It is a concern that other internships with some state agencies have not been so kind to highly qualified young personnel.

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

Drogheda, the biggest town in the state, has a population in the region neigh on 40,000 and it is hard to manage issues in relation to litter control and tidiness with the same degree of success as smaller centres can.

That said, primarily because of the co operation businesses, local authority, clubs and the wider community in various housing developments, the standard in this category is very good.

Measures that are driven by the Tidy Towns Committee are paying off and the adjudicator was impressed with what has been, of which there are eight, are properly maintained.

So credit is due to these hardworking personnel on that score.

As my late mother used to say after making sure the front of house and garden were up to scratch “it's important to have the saluting party looking well”

Yes the adjudicator visited the bus station and there has been an improvement since last year but there still was some litter visible on what was a very busy time of day.

The measures that you have taken to convey to the public the need for good litter will pay off but there will be some deaf ears that won't pay heed and such is life.

All one can do is spread the gospel and it's also up to the council to apply the law where necessary.

I have already mentioned my visit to the Cord Graveyard in another section and saw for one's self the great work that has been done, but right across the road from entrance on Thomas Street a bin was overflowing with a plastic bag of rubbish at the base.

There was a bit of a litter trap as one approaches Bridge at end of Georges Street

The issue of dereliction has been dealt with under built environment but it also applies to this category was well and there are more than a few unacceptable examples in fairly central parts of the town

Some of these properties may be the subject of family disputes and other legalities and it's often outside the control of any voluntary committee to exert any influence on such matters.

It's important to keep dialogue going in cases of a sensitive nature.

Do also bear in mind that whilst there are those of us that are passionate about Tidy Towns there are others who may not be or are not obligated to be.

Patience is often the key to get people to come around to your way of thinking.

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

A very good approach taken in this section and one that could be replicated in other fairly large towns.

This clustering approach is a good way to generate a spirit of pride of place amongst residents whether they be from outlying housing areas and part of a town house network nearer the centre of town.

The adjudicator visited a cross section in the East end of the town nearer the centre and further out in the vicinity of the Newtown Blues GAA Club Grounds.

It would be impossible to highlight all the areas from Ousters Lane out to the relatively new Cherry wood except to say that for the most part residents have shown great pride in their areas,

The interaction between residents associations and the volunteer approach is paying dividends and the Committee has to be lauded for encouraging this approach.

Bryanstown, which one presumes is in County Meath, is an example to all of how to minimise household charges because of prize money won in different competitions.

Not so sure that the comment that followed was necessary as everyone has pride in their own area irrespective of its standing.

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

The adjudicator travelled in from a number of routes including two off the M1 from Moanasterboice and in by the Retail Park which was pretty easy enough to navigate.

The Termonfeckin Road Approach in by the well appointed Newtown Blues GAA Club was also very acceptable.

The Old Dublin Road 132 with double roundabout and in by Dunnes Stores at the Southgate Shopping Centre was rather busy so once around these was sufficient to see that these have been maintained in accordance with good practice.

The approach into the town from the 167 in by the port was also acceptable and whilst Donors Green was missed by the adjudicator it's good to note that the areas has been improved immeasurably

The new approach road signs will be a big addition to visitors coming to Drogheda but do take cognisance of the fact that internal signage in the centre directing people outwards need to be looked at.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

It was very pleasing to come back to Drogheda after many years and see the transformation that has taken place in this historic town. Keep up the excellent work and you are wished well for the future.