

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dundalk** Ref: **494**
County: **Louth** Mark: **306**
Category: **H** Date(s): **18/06/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	55	55
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	42	43
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	42
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	31
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	51
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	37
TOTAL MARK	450	303	306

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Dundalk is welcomed to the 2015 Supervalu Tidy Towns Competition.

Thank you kindly for the very comprehensive application/entry form and the ancillary back up support material.

The map supplied was very sufficient for the purposes of adjudication of the town and its environs but this adjudicator abandoned the proposed driving route and took to shanks mare.

This was much less stressful, more informative in terms of identifying what had to be adjudicated and if a little hard on the feet much more beneficial from a cardiovascular exercise point of view!

It has been quite some time since this adjudicator has been to Dundalk and the transformation, especially in the core areas, has been immense.

Dundalk Town Centre is now a vibrant area that people seem to gravitate to and this seems to have counteracted the doughnut effect that has affected other large cities and towns in the country.

At this juncture the adjudicator should point out that the volume of material supplied as part of the application was a little overwhelming, 100 plus pages including appendices, and it would be neigh impossible to condense everything into a two page document which is the norm for Tidy Town reports.

The old adage "A little less is often more" comes to mind.

Given the number of stakeholders that are involved with Dundalk Tidy Towns one does appreciate that they all may have had to be accommodated in your submission.

Suffice to say that the adjudication was fair, impartial and within the guidelines and it should be noted that at the top end of the marking system, which Dundalk is in, every additional pint gained is hard earned.

The 16 person committee is very representative of all strata of life in the town and its surrounds and you have been fortunate to have such excellent support from the local authority, TUS, Probation Service and other such relevant agencies that contribute to social inclusion and the overall development of the town

Obviously the work that you have been doing for the betterment of the town has been recognised by the business community, residents associations and the wider population and this is reflected very much in your application.

34 listed active partnerships is a very impressive

This adjudicator is very much supportive of the need to get youth involvement in the tidy towns movement increased and to help to bring about innovative ways that this can be achieved.

Having a representative on board from Comhairle Na Oig is a perfect example of youth

involvement as it has a two way benefit and in terms of information and idea sharing.

Congratulations to all those schools that have achieved and maintained Green Flag status.

I guess a "Brocante" is what we know down the country as a second hand goods market or a pop up shop! It seems to have taken off amongst the Louth Tidy Towns fraternity

This type of event is extremely good fundraising mechanisms.

No need to go into detail on the methods of communication except to say well done on the mix of traditional and the ever changing new methods such as Twitter, Whats App, Facebook and Viber.

Well done on the Tidy Towns Weekend Brochure

Just an aside in relation to the Dundalk Guide, there were actually five partners (No Failte Ireland!) involved in its production and it's important that all get recognition as I presume they all contributed to the funding of this excellent publication!

Also the Dundalk Tidy Towns website isn't up to date as of today.

During the course of adjudication the adjudicator called into the TIO and compliments are due to the staff, particularly one lady, on the manner which they promoted Dundalk.

Overall a very good approach in this category outlining your interaction with the greater Dundalk community/.

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

Traversing the town on foot was a very engaging experience for this adjudicator as it combined adjudicating duties with taking in the heritage and history of Dundalk.

Again compliments to the committee for undertaking and completing some excellent projects during the last year. Most notable amongst these was the Outdoor Gym in two locations on the periphery of the town, both the Heritage Posters and the very impressive Quay Street Mural project.

One doesn't want to labour the point excessively but it is only right that due acknowledgement be given to the partners that helped to make each one of these "specific" projects come to fruition.

The adjudicator visited the famed Navy Bank and observed the use being made by young and old of the outdoor gym.

It is also close to the O Mahony's GAA Club who no doubt makes use of the facility.

Congratulations on acquiring funding from the Department of Environments Public Area Enhancement scheme which no doubt had to be leveraged with matching fund – no mean achievement in present era of limited grant supports.

As alluded to in the previous section the centre of Town has become very attractive especially the relatively newly developed Market Square Centre with the iconic Tain Project, fountain effect, big screen and the magnificent Down Syndrome Ireland Exhibition "Where I am".

The photography by David Murphy? depicted the true essence of this exhibition.

Clanbrassil Street has some very historical buildings and impressive shop fronts and it also has like similar sized towns problems with dereliction and unoccupied premises.

It's such a pity to see t such a fine building that houses DK Interiors in such bad state of repair.

This was built in the early 1800s and has such an ornate façade that it would look magnificent if restored.

The Open Doors Project is a very innovative concept and the adjudicator visited all of the places mentioned including both the Anglican and RC Churches (under restoration) of St Nicholas. St Nicholas seems to be a popular saint in Louth.

The County Museum in Jocelyn Street is a very impressive and well maintained premises with some very interesting ongoing exhibitions including one on the Irish in World War.

The staff were very informative and it its worth a return visit when on a more leisurely trip to Dundalk.

Colaiste Ris adjacent to Yorke Street and Chapel Street was well presented and has benefited from the philanthropy of one its most famous pupils latterly deceased.

Other local schools visited were Scoil Naisiunta Muire Na Gael off Avenue Road, Dun Dealgan National School in the fine old red brick building on Jocelyn Street it looked as if a planning application had been put forward for expansion.

St Malachy's on Anne Street and St Vincent's Secondary School, which one presumes formed part of the convent in past days were also well presented on the day.

Both the impressive St Patricks RC and the historic Dundalk Presbyterian Church nearby deserve to be mentioned for the manner in which they have been maintained.

The following are a number of individual premises that caught the eye of this adjudicator:

The Greenore Railway Saloon on Quay Street, Houstons on Clanbrassil Street, Michael Lynch Menwear on same street, Toale's on Crowe Street, Lins Take Away very tidy, Enos and McGrougns on Roden Place.

As is the case on other large towns there was a proliferation of plastic garish signs on some properties. The Committee has worked hard to make positive and address issues of concern which are alluded to in the application. An increase of an additional point is warranted

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The comments and recommendations made by last year's adjudicator were taken very much on board by the committee.

The idea of having 14 additional raised beds put in place over a period of a year would have been alien to many other committees simply because most would not have the access to the resources that you have available to you from the Town Council.

That said you are to be commended for engaging with the Town Council in ensuring that this suggestion to full fruition.

Incorporating both the Failte go Dun Dealgan and Gold Medal Winner Signage was a novel and practical idea.

Having parked the car at Wolfe Tone Terrace the adjudicator took a walk down St Nicholas Avenue and on to Boyle O Reilly Terrace to examine the work undertaken under the Peace Forest Ireland Project

This adjudicator was very impressed with both the short term floral arrangements that adorn the centre of town most notably the colourful tubs, window boxes and hanging baskets all filled with the old reliables; trailing petunias, lobellia, impatiens etc.

It is not overdone but is effective at a number of junctions that would otherwise look very sparse if they were not there

This adjudicator is also a big fan of geraniums and pelargoniums and was impressed with the planting scheme at

Jocelyn Drive.

One read with interest your ongoing section on continuous landscaping taking into account the needs of particular areas of the town and selecting shrubs and trees that would survive and be semi self sustainable in the conditions that prevail.

Hypericum I presume should read Hypericum(the good mood shrub).

Ill desist from making a comment on planting them at inner relief roads and traffic calming!

Overall the standard in this category was very good.

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

The key issues that an adjudicator refers to in this category are primarily around the areas of education, conservation and the communication of the importance of local wildlife heritage and the interpretation of same. Since last year the committee has undertaken a number of sizable projects that encompass most of the above in some format or other.

For instance the most practical mini project undertaken was the biodiversity training put in place for all committee members via the then Town Council and the Louth Heritage Officer.

An interesting observation, which is not altogether quite true, is that biodiversity knowledge comes a little easier to rural dwellers.

The benefits of this bio diversity training have now been put into practical use with the survey at the Dundalk Landfill underway.

The proposed development of a 35 acre site as a wild flower meadow is ambitious but looks like it will go ahead and this will be a major contributor to wild life promotion and conservation in the area.

This combined with the work started on the site at Ice House Hill on the development of the Apothecary Garden, new wildlife and standardised landscape signage merits an increase of additional mark.

The idea of a Stumpery – new life for old wood-is a novel one but not new as they were very popular with gardeners of both the Victorian times and also in the fifties/

They are interesting way of using materials that would otherwise be wasted and can provide a natural habitat for many species of wildlife and cover for shade loving plants such as ferns and hellebores.

Commendations to the committee for organising lectures by Birdwatch Ireland and Biodiversity Ireland.

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

The reasoning behind the increase in marks in this category is to recognise the importance of the need for waste prevention as distinct from waste management.

Committees are encourage to undertake projects of scale that will contribute to this ethos and it's important that all sectors of a community are informed of such projects that will help both in the prevention and ultimately in the reduction of the waste mountain nationally.

One or two of the projects detailed in this year's application seem to be a continuation of what you had in place last year according to the competition report.

The earth hour initiative, whilst very worthwhile, might not be a practical ongoing measure.

The promotion of energy efficiency around the County is the remit of the Local Authority

The adjudicator is rather confused with the following paragraph under Green Flag for rehab Centre "the Brocante (Bric a brac, garage/attic exchange /sale) taking place (already discussed) in September 2013 will further aid in waste minimisation"

This suggests that this page was submitted for the 2013 Competition or is it a typographical error?

The adjudicator was also a little confused with the inclusion of the Uisce Bagga in the submission.

This idea was up for piloting as a water conservation method by Louth County Council in 2011 under the watch of the previous County Manager.

Since then it seems that little has been heard of the product as the Wexford based promoter was finding it difficult to get start up funding.

Trashion seems to be the new buzz idea in vogue at the moment.

Maybe refer back to localprevention.ie for additional original project ideas that will be more prevention oriented.

Other websites that would possibly help are

www.greenhome.ie, www.stopfoodwaste.ie, www.repaircafe.ie, www.foodwaste.ie

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The overall standard in this combined section was quite good considering the size of the town and its environs.

Efforts have been made by the committee to address contentious areas both in respect of litter and general tidiness.

A number of programmes have been put in place to make the general public aware of the need to ensure that the areas in "their" town are kept litter and gum free as well as keeping frontages and back areas relatively clean and tidy.

For the most part this approach has worked effectively.

Getting schools involved in litter patrols as part of a civics related contribution to the town is the key to building a sense of pride in Dundalk amongst the student population.

Last year a number of areas were highlighted by the adjudicator and all these were visited again this year some had improved and a few stayed static.

The road surface on Chapel Street is rather rough and broken in patches and some litter was observed on the corner near O Carrolls Pub.

A corner off Wrightons Lane had chipped kerbs and some graffiti on the gable end of one of the red brick terrace house.

The adjudicator observed a number of open spaces and side areas that were in poor condition but given the size of

town and surrounds this to be expected.

One also has to remember that not everyone are exercised by Tidy Towns and it needs a continuation of what you as a committee are doing to keep the message of tidiness and litter control to the forefront.

Parts of lower Jocelyn Street had a proliferation of cigarette butts plus a few cans and bottles

The core areas in the town were for the most part well kept.

One particular basement location with wrought iron railings at street level was used as a dumping ground for cans and litter; unfortunately the adjudicator forgot to note the actual street except to say it was within the centre of town area.

Some things are outside the control of any voluntary committee and all that can be done is keep making the public aware of what good litter and tidiness control is all about.

Issues such as cracked footpaths and over hanging wires are a matter for the Town/County Council and budgets dictate matters in relation town improvements.

Like any other town of its size Dundalk has some problems with derelict/unoccupied properties, dated shop signage and a few litter black spots.

It was very noticeable that there was very little dog fouling to be seen in the town centre and at the outskirts visited so the message has been heeded by dog owners and the dog fouling analysis must have triggered a positive reaction also.

The boundary areas were also well maintained and it was good to see that the very large retail park was well managed.

Some of the large signs of multinational companies on the boundary road are getting a little dirty and need cleaning – a job which will not be easy.

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

Like other towns of similar size Dundalk has a myriad of housing developments somewhere in the region of between 60 and 70 would be this adjudicator's estimate.

Many are long established and a large number are newly developed on the outskirts of the town.

A cross section of these were visited just to gauge the overall condition.

The internal competition Improve Our Town Awards has helped to create a competitive spirit among residents associations as the standard of presentation was very good in general.

First up for a visit were the impressive red bricked terrace houses on the Carrickmacross Road and also on the Ardee Road.

No visit to this area would be complete without a call to Oriel Park and remembering the days of the great Dundalk teams of the past featuring the likes of late legendary Tommy McConville and Cathal Muckian.

The adjudicator visited Mulholland Avenue, the Dundalk version, and observed a linear row of some very attractive houses with very well maintained frontages

Avondale Park, Meadow View ,Belfry Drive and Crescent all established areas that were very well presented and a credit to the residents of those areas.

Barton Park, Ailsing Park, Cedarwood Park and others in and around Clanna Gael GAA Ground and The Church of the Holy Redeemer in Ard Easmuinn were visited and were in an overall context well maintained and presented

Finally the adjudicator visited what was termed as the most problematic estate in Dundalk in a Sunday Newspaper. This is a most unjustified depiction of a large sprawling estate where vast majority of the residents are presenting

properties in a good manner.

Whilst it has access to the outdoor gym in the park nearby this is a community area that could benefit from another social inclusion project such as a neighbourhood dome garden where young and old could share the skills of growing plants and vegetables from scratch.

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

Despite your comment that condition of the approach roads was impacting negatively on your scoring in the competition the overall standard of presentation was good.

One must remember that town has seen major expansion on the periphery areas over the last few decades and this is bound to create infrastructural disruption.

I agree with last year's adjudicator comment that sometimes less is more.

There is nothing worse than a profusion of name or directional signs as one enters a town or village.

As mentioned last year the provision of such a large number of cycle lanes is a great bonus to the town's population both transient (primarily student) and permanent.

Good to note that directional signs to the main cities on the Island Dublin and Belfast are well positioned at different parts of the town.

The blue sign for the M1 is incorporated on the above are also very visible which is what the majority of visitors want to see when trying to navigate out of a town centre that they are not familiar with

Concluding Remarks:

The adjudicator was pleased to come back to Dundalk after many years and see such positive changes that have occurred in the interim. Your work as committee has paid dividends, remember the town is in the high end scoring bracket and hope fully will maintain and improve upon that in the years ahead. You are wished well for the future.