

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clones** Ref: **710**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **278**
Category: **C** Date(s): **16/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	44
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	33	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25	26
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48	49
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	27	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	31	32
TOTAL MARK	450	264	278

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome Clones to the 2015 tidy towns competition as your involvement is much appreciated. Although there is a good number of members on your committee (12), an increase in membership could result in an increase in the number and size of the projects that you could take on. Why not go on a recruitment drive? Given the size of your town, it is likely that it has a good selection of sports or social clubs – which are normally a good source for new members! Alternatively, your committee could consider delegating some of its projects to interested groups and clubs. Is there an active retirement group that would take on the maintenance of some of your landscaping schemes? All these options should be considered to lighten your workload and increase participation in your town further. You are commended on building up a good relationship with Monaghan County Council, Fas and other agencies and bodies. We wondered if you had also approached the leader company for advice, funding or support? We are pleased to see that you have a very good communication strategy and this is an important first step in a recruitment drive and well done on developing an online presence. You are commended on your strong links with the school and youth clubs and once again we would encourage you to give them responsibility for some of your projects – perhaps in the landscaping, wildlife and waste minimisation categories. Thank you for your completed application form and map as it was helpful during adjudication. Well done on following the suggestions of the adjudicator in 2014 as the map was a big improvement. Your sli na slainte brochure, angling brochure, green schools information, photos and town trail map were also received. It is noted that no plan has been included and this was a surprise as the 2014 adjudicators report referred to a plan summary last year. Please remember to submit your tidy towns action plan every year as the tidy towns unit do not retain any of the information that you send in.

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

The adjudicator was not familiar with Clones before this visit and we were delighted to find that there was a host of interesting buildings, features and wonderful new parks to be seen. St Ternachs Church of Ireland which occupies the most prominent position in the town is a majestic natural stone structure and the Diamond (with its recently repaired steps) provides a lovely focal point for the town. The triangular fountain area (with seating) opposite also looked very well. It is encouraging to see that there are so many original buildings in good condition and in active use in the town centre. We particularly liked the Post Office, the Barry, Henderson and Hickey solicitors building, and the Bank of Ireland. We note that the distinctive market house which formally accommodated the town library is now used as a market. The Credit Union building looked particularly well and one hopes that the fine Ulster bank building will find a new occupant and use soon. Fermanagh Street also impressed with its wonderfully intact streetscapes and many fine retail premises. The Tower Bar (with its stained glass windows and recessed shopfront) and Supervalu looked great while the traditional shopfronts of McCusker's, Matthews and Hickeys also stood out. Creightons Hotel looked very well and we admired the complex of period buildings that line the perimeter of its car

park. Are their plans to refurbish and reuse some of these? The archways and pedestrian connections are also a lovely aspect of the street. We are pleased to see that good commercial premises were not confined to Fermanagh Street and the central area with the round tower bar and Adams bar (both further out) looking particularly well. The lovely terraces of period dwellings that lined Newtownbutler Road were admired and it seems an obvious location for an architectural conservation area. We enjoyed visiting Church Hill which is home to some wonderful buildings with the Sacred Heart Church and the Parochial Hall drawing positive attention. The vacant sites and buildings (particularly to the rear of the main streets) present a challenge for the committee and we urge you to seek the assistance of the Council in devising a strategy for dealing with these. However, 2015 has certainly been an exciting year for projects under the built environment category. We were amazed to hear of the many excellent projects that have taken place in your town since you last visited and we were delighted to have an opportunity to see them at first hand. Barry McGuigan Park is a wonderful new amenity for the town while the Cara Street Play Park is fantastic – these are first class facilities which are very valuable and positive additions to your town. We loved the Ulster Canal stores and it represents an excellent reuse of this historic building. However, the Peace Link is particularly impressive and congratulations are due to all concerned for getting such a wonderful new facility in Clones. Well done also on the installation of heritage signs as they looked fresh and new during adjudication and the sli na slainte route is a great idea that will interest locals and tourists in equal measure. Your proposed Canal walkway along the Ulster Canal is acknowledged and we look forward to seeing this completed in the years ahead.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

A number of very attractive landscaping schemes were seen during adjudication. We were most impressed with the attractive bed of lovely colourful summer flowering plants that could be seen at the junction of the Monaghan Street and O'Duffy Street. We also like the discreet landscaping beds that were accommodated in the grass verge lining the new footpath along O'Duffy Street to the front of Barry McGuigan Park. In the town centre, an attractive natural stone faced bed with bright summer flowering plants was admired opposite the fountain. The contribution of individual businesses (particularly the Hotel and the Council building on Monaghan Street) to the landscaping category is also acknowledged with colourful windowboxes and hanging baskets enhancing the town centre. The landscaping at the new car park looked exceptionally well. The gravel base beds with perennial planting at its entrance was admired and we also liked the planting that could be found around the perimeter of the car park. The adjudicators were delighted to see that the town has now got not one but two amazing new parks and the standard of these facilities is second to none. The committee is also commended on maintaining all green spaces and landscaping schemes throughout the town – they all looked well and it was clear that they had benefited from your attention. Well done to the committee for undertaking a gardening course and the positive influence of this can already be seen in your planting schemes. We were a little surprised to see that more of the approach roads had not been considered for planting (particularly around the entrance signage) and we wondered if this could be provided in future years?

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

It is clear from your entry form that Clones is very well provided for when it comes to habitats and natural amenities with numerous rivers and lakes around the town (many of which have been identified as coarse fishing centres with a rich variety of fish species) as well as a number of high quality parks within the town boundary. There is no doubt that the age friendly biodiversity Park is a terrific amenity for your town and it provides a lovely setting to educate the town's residents about the rich biodiversity on their doorstep. It is noted that the 2014 adjudicators report included a reference to links between the biodiversity Park and the new Brian McGuigan Park and we wondered if these connections are in place? We also acknowledge your comment regarding your intention to identify other projects under this category in the years ahead. Have you considered undertaking a wildlife survey of some of your wonderful natural amenities? For example, why not carry out a survey of one of your town parks in order to establish the levels of biodiversity to be found within it? The results of this survey could be used to devise future projects under this category as you will be able to ascertain what needs to be done in order to sustain or improve the level of biodiversity.

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

This importance of this category has increased significantly in the tidy towns competition with a total of 50 marks now allocated to it – this is same number of marks that are allocated to other key categories such as built environment, landscaping and wildlife. Therefore, it represents an excellent opportunity for your committee to improve your performance in the competition. This can be achieved by coming up with innovative ways of minimising and eliminating waste and encouraging sustainable resource use in your communities. Your application form lists a number of different measures designed to reduce waste and encourage recycling that have been undertaken by the school and the local authority but we need to hear about what the tidy towns committee is doing. For example, why not tell us about how the tidy towns committee goes about reducing and eliminating waste when carrying out its day-to-day activities? Do you make your own compost from grass cuttings and plant trimmings for use in your landscaping schemes? Is rainwater harvested for watering your hanging baskets? Do you grow your own plants for your landscaping schemes? All these actions represent simple but effective ways of reducing and eliminating waste and they will also enable the committee to lead by example in Clones. Other ideas for projects under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

We are pleased to report that the standard of litter control in Clones during adjudication was generally high. The vast majority of areas seen during our visit were litter free and neat and tidy. While there were some exceptions to this, these were generally confined to isolated areas. Litter was observed on the Sacred Heart cemetery road, at the

O'Neill estate and around the Go \ Spar service station on the Monaghan road. The service station appears to be a blackspot with litter on the forecourt and a parking area to the side. However, the town centre area was particularly clean with virtually no litter present. The standard of tidiness was also considered to be very high with all areas free from weeds and pavements and roadsides neatly swept. The only exception to this high standard was the vacant sites to the rear of the town centre and along O'Duffy Street as they often accommodated litter and weed and had poor boundary treatment. Given that a number of these sites function as car parks, we wondered if their boundary treatment could be improved (or screened using planting) and their surfacing revamped in order to improve the appearance? The verge lining the Sacred Heart cemetery was also quite untidy looking due to poor quality servicing and visible weed.

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

We were quite impressed with the standard of residential estates in Clones on adjudication day. The work undertaken to O'Neill Park was observed as neatly trimmed grass and attractive planters could be spotted on the small green area. However, further improvements are possible and litter and some graffiti on the substation was viewed. The playground in this area is a lovely and popular amenity. Beechgrove is very impressive and it looked tremendously well. The improvements to Cherry Park were seen with colourful planters observed on the small roadside park and neatly trimmed grass on the central green. Well done on the provision of a new sign at Carn Dun and your regular maintenance of the green areas in residential estates. It is further noted that the council had been working with the residents of O'Neill Park in clearing up the back lanes and painting fences in Carn View.

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

The standard of approach roads going into Clones is generally good with very well maintained road verges and neatly swept footpaths to be seen in most instances. Speed limit signage is also generally clean and visible. However, while entrance signage can be seen on key approach roads (such as the N54 from Monaghan), it is not visible on all approach roads into the town. In addition, landscaping schemes on approach roads are largely absent. It is recommended that a consistent approach is taken to all approach roads with standardised name signs been provided on each entrance to the town. In addition, small landscaping schemes or planters should be considered as a means of enhancing name signage.

Concluding Remarks:

It is clear that 2014 and 2015 have been tremendously significant for your town with the opening of two new parks and the launch of the fabulous peace link. We hope that the other proposed projects will follow soon and we look forward to returning in 2016.