

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **302**
Category: **E** Date(s): **17/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	44
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	35	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	50	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36	38
TOTAL MARK	450	292	302

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Monaghan to the 2015 Tidy Towns Competition and we appreciate your involvement. It is great to see that your core group of 12 to 14 members enjoys the support of a network of ancillary committees and 4 separate junior tidy towns groups in the local estates. You are commended on the strong links that you have formed with Monaghan Town Council and County Council, Monaghan Volunteer Office and Monaghan County Museum staff, the Monaghan Rehab Group and the National learning network. We were pleased to see that a number of voluntary and community groups such as the Transition Group, the Men's Shed, the Allotment Group and Residents Committees in the town also get involved in your projects. Your communication strategy is very impressive with all forms of communication bring used to get your message across and there seems little doubt that this strategy is working. It is great to see that you have very good engagement with the local schools and we were delighted to see that there are 4 no. junior tidy towns groups in your town. The organization, activities and projects of the junior tidy towns groups is incredibly impressive and it seems clear from the entry documentation that they have a key role in improving Monaghan town. We urge you to continue with this approach and we wish you luck in developing a youth tidy towns section to keep the growing kids involved. Thanks you for comprehensive application form and map as they were helpful during adjudication but we wondered if it was possible to get a printed map for 2016? It is also recommended that double sided printing is used to cut down on paper waste.

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

The adjudicator had not visited Monaghan in a number of years and it was great to see the progress that had been made in the intervening period. The town centre improvements alluded to in your entry form (such as moving the Cross to old Cross Square, undergrounding the cables, repaving the pathways and resurfacing the roads) have made a very positive difference and it looked tremendously well on adjudication day. We especially liked the historical buildings that can be seen around every corner and in every street in the town centre and it is great to see that the vast majority are in good condition and in productive use. While it is not possible to mention them all in this short report, a number stood out with the magnificent Cathedral looking particularly well and that Presbyterian Church on Dublin Street also drawing attention. We would like to commend the many businesses who occupied heritage buildings with the Bank of Ireland and the Westenra hotel presenting their buildings in the best possible light. The standard of shopfronts and business premises in general was very very high and this is no doubt in part due to the excellent painting scheme that your committee operates. The committee is also commended on undertaking such impressive projects under this category for 2015 competition. The assembly rooms looked particularly smart with its fresh coat of paint and the other buildings that have been the focus of your attention (the former Chieftain Bar, St Endas, Supreme Dry Cleaners, Deselec, the Railway Station and Mrs Hegartys among others) also looked very well. We note that you have also painted buildings in order to improve public areas such as the Dublin Street Alley Way We were amazed to read about the discovery of the Lough house and we look forward

to seeing this building refurbished in the years ahead.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Monaghan has traditionally performed strongly in this category and in 2015 you could well have exceeded the high standard you previously set yourself. It is great to see that the committee are continually identifying new projects and completing them to a high standard. The planting at the Coolshannagh roundabout is one such example of this and we admired the diverse range of plant species at the varying levels that could be seen in this location. We are delighted to report that the new sculpture was in place at the time of adjudication but the landscaping around its base appear to be a work in progress and we look forward to seeing the sculpture with its landscape plan implemented in 2016. Whilst it is not possible to review all landscaping and planting schemes seen, a number of highlights were identified. The landscaping at the McCartan Street \ Clones Road \ Market Street junction was particularly impressive as it extended across each of the four corners of the junction and it accommodated an almost bewildering array of colourful seasonal flower flowering plants - including sunflowers that had reached the height of the directional signs by the time of adjudication. The landscaping at the roundabout at Old Cross Square was an explosion of colour as the roses were in full bloom and we also liked the colourful planting on the Clones road roundabout. The committee is commended on the many fine projects that were completed under this category and which included the work to the landscaping beds aside the old railway station. This project may require some further consideration for next year as the grasses surrounding the letters GNR had begun to obscure the letters and appear to have withered. We applaud the decision of the committee to continue with its impressive tree planting programme as a total of 290 native trees were planted throughout the town in 2015. This is one of the best projects that has been undertaken and the benefits of it will be felt for years (and generations) to come. We were most interested to read that a Victorian garden is proposed for the grounds of the 19th Century Canal Lock House and we look forward to seeing this fascinating project unfold in the years ahead.

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

We were most impressed with the range of projects presented under this category for 2015 and it is great to see that there is an equal emphasis on projects that aim to conserve and enhance habitats and natural amenities and projects that focus on raising awareness of biodiversity and the natural environment. For the adjudicator, the excellent biodiversity trail that follows the Greenway stands out – what a fantastic idea! We also loved the great initiatives in it such as the outdoor classroom and the interpretive signage. These are very innovative ways of raising environmental awareness about biodiversity and the committee and the junior tidy towns group are strongly commended on using this wonderful amenity to highlight the biodiversity that can be found in your town. The Dispersed Urban Orchard initiative is also a great initiative and we would be interested to hear about how many of the fruit trees were planted by residents. It is considered to be a very innovative way of boosting the number of trees planted in an urban environment by overcoming one of the key constraints – which is the lack of available land. However, be sure to record where the trees are planted. It is heartening to read that your committee is engaging in birdlife and wildlife monitoring programs and that the results of these activities are being recorded with Birdwatch Ireland and others. These are particularly good projects as they will not only improve the understanding of the wildlife and birdlife a local level but will also improve our understanding at County and national level. We also liked your other projects which included the provision of a bat hotel in the canal lock house, the bee hive, the streamscapes project and the eco camps so be sure to keep us updated on these in 2016.

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

The committee and the junior tidy towns group have excelled in this category for 2015 with a range of practical and innovative ways for achieving a reduction in waste generated and a more stable use of scarce resources included in your entry form. We are quite convinced that the committee and the junior tidy towns group are leading by example in this area and it is hoped that you can encourage others in your town to follow suit. Why not undertake a survey of householders in Monaghan in order to see how many are engaging in waste minimising behaviour and seeking to reduce their use of resources? This could perhaps be achieved with the assistance of the school by requesting that the pupils in the school ask their parents to participate. The findings of this survey would pinpoint what needs to be done in order to get more people in Monaghan town engaging in sustainable waste and resource management. We note from your entry form that the excellent Greenway is proving to be very popular with greater numbers cycling, walking and jogging along the route. Whilst this is not surprising, we would love to hear about how many people are using this facility on a daily basis. It would also be great to know if the Greenway has succeeded in changing transport behaviour – by encouraging people to cycle and walk instead of driving. Perhaps some of the pupils of the school in the education campus (which is accessible by using the Greenway) could undertake a project on this topic? We were pleased to read that the Tidy Towns Committee is also moving towards a zero waste communication strategy and that a number of businesses in the town are committed to sustainable waste and resource management through their participation in the STEM project and the Green Hospitality Programme. The Mullaghmat food digester sounds like a great idea but we wondered about its impact – for example, how many people are using it and how much has compostable waste declined as a result? The water conservation project is also an excellent initiative but once again, we would be interested to hear about how much the water saving containers have reduced water requirements.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The work of the committee and the junior tidy towns group under this category is highly impressive. We enjoyed reading about your numerous initiatives to raise awareness of the need for litter control and we are at the view following adjudication that your billboard advertisements, radio announcements and the work of the litter vigilantes in the junior tidy towns is proving to be effective. This was evident from the high standard of litter control that was

observed during adjudication as the vast majority of areas are particularly clean and tidy. Although not litter free, only a small amount of litter can be found in isolated locations outside the town centre. They included the Mullaghmatt estate, the convent long-term car park, the teach na daoine shops and on North Road. The bring bank in the Tesco car park was also littered and it may require more regular inspections. However, it must be emphasised that these areas are the exception rather than the rule and the committee and the junior tidy towns group should be very proud of their work under this category. The standard of tidiness was also very high as a result of the committee (and their many volunteers and helpers) diligent approach to weed removal and verge and roadside maintenance. A small number of improvements remain possible. An untidy substation could be found on the North Road opposite the railway building, some very untidy black and yellow ramps sign is were seen at the intersection of the Cycle Way and the Park Road and the pedestrian barriers on the Clones road in front of the long-term car park will need to be painted in time for 2016. Untidy signage could also be seen in the vicinity of the Teach na Daoine shopping area.

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

The standard of residential estates in Monaghan town was generally considered to be good and while they are too numerous to be dealt with in detail in this report, a selection of those visited will be referred to. We loved Belgium Park is this is a most attractive and original housing scheme with its natural stone and redbrick finishes as well as its charming green areas which are maintained to a good standard. Tully, close to the Ballybay road, also impressed with its attractive name stone, diverse entrance planting and carefully maintained green area. Killygoan opposite, also looked well and we were impressed by its mature trees, pleasant park and popular playground. Lathlurcan, to the rear of the cathedral generally looked well and the new entrance walls were observed. However, the verge that surrounds the wall was little untidy and overgrown during adjudication. Mullaghmatt off Park Road is improving with its nicely maintained green areas to be viewed.

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

The approach roads into Monaghan were generally impressive and their appearance is significantly enhanced by the care, attention and planting on the roundabouts that can be found on the principal approaches. The majority of road verges, roadsides and pathways were all weed free and cleanly swept and this also helped to create a good impression. Similarly, the work on improving fencing around the town has had a positive impact. The focus of the committee on cleaning up and improving the alleyways and laneways in the town centre is also considered to be successful as these public areas looked well during adjudication.

Concluding Remarks:

We would like to congratulate the committee and the junior tidy towns committee on the great work that you have undertaken in Monaghan in 2015 as it has made a very positive difference to the appearance of your town. Well done and keep up the good work as we look forward to returning to see further progress in 2016.