

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Rockcorry** Ref: **613**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **289**
Category: **A** Date(s): **16/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	36	36
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	39	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	39	41
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	26	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	9	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	42	42
TOTAL MARK	450	281	289

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Rockcorry to the 2015 tidy towns competition as your participation is appreciated. Your dedicated committee of nine seems have built up strong links with Monaghan County Council and a host of others including local businesses, Church Groups, the ICA, elected representatives and the GAA in your village. Your partnership approach with other community groups is commended as we have no doubt that it results in the selection and completion of projects that have broad-based support. We note that your communication strategy is based solely on the traditional means of newspaper adverts and flyers and while this is proving effective for you, it should be remembered that digital communication (such as texting, e-mail, social media and websites) may result in less waste and reach more people. Well done on involving the local school in your litter control projects such as the spring clean but we would encourage you to delegate some other projects to them in the areas of landscaping, wildlife and waste minimisation. Thank you for the positive comments on the competition and we are delighted to hear that it has brought many benefits locally. Your completed application form and map was reasonably helpful and thank you for taking on board the suggestions of the adjudicator in 2014. The map could be improved by including key landmarks on it such as the Market House, Teapot Row, the Mill, the School, the Creche and so on. The photos were also very helpful. Give some consideration in the year ahead to producing a tidy towns action plan. This is a very effective way of identifying projects under each of the tidy towns categories and for scheduling your workload. It may also earn you extra marks under this category!

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

Rockcorry is a fascinating little village with numerous buildings and structures of interest. We were delighted to see that the historical core of the village appears to be intact with all of the two-storey terraced buildings in the centre appearing to be of traditional design. Your village is also fortunate to have many fine historical buildings such as St James' Church (with its rather unusual belltower) and the Market House. The Presbyterian Church also looked well and your work to conserve and improve the appearance of the lovely 'Widows Row' is both understood and appreciated. There is no doubt that some of the historical buildings in Rockcorry face challenges, with Teapot Row and the Mill providing evidence of this but we would urge you to continue to seek to preserve and refurbish these wonderful structures as they provide your village with a very distinctive character and identity. It is great to see that the Village Shop has reopened and An Siopa Beag looked very well during adjudication. Fitzpatrick's, also achieved a good standard of presentation and we note that 'Greggs' former residence has a new sign denoting this fact. The new uniform timber signage throughout Rockcorry looked very well and we applaud your decision to make it bilingual. St Mary's Hall looked smart with its fresh coat of paint and the school from boundary wall may also need to be painted in time for 2016. We were impressed with your excellent work to the car park adjacent to Rockriver View and this has noticeably improved the appearance of this area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Your committee has certainly been busy installing, providing and maintaining planters throughout the village with a significant number viewed during adjudication. These planters looked very well and the seasonal flowering plants provided therein bring tremendous summer colour to your village. We liked the landscaping at the green which was combination of semi-mature trees, summer flowering plants and some perennials. The seating areas here are also very attractive and they are a nice addition to your village. The landscaped area on the Newbliss road (which we think is located beside the pump house) is impressive with its neatly trimmed grass, appealing seat and colourful summer flowering plants. This is considered to be an excellent use of what would otherwise be an incidental (and potentially untidy) space. The contribution of businesses (such as an Siopa Beag and Fitzpatrick's Pub) to this category is acknowledged as both were adorned with colourful hanging baskets. Very attractive baskets and planters were also observed at the entrance to the Presbyterian Church, St James's Church and the Market House. You are commended on your decision to follow the advice of the adjudicator in 2014 and plant a number of wildflower areas throughout the village (particularly on the Monaghan and Newbliss approach roads) and we hope that this initiative is maintained in the years ahead as their contribution to wildlife is positive. Well done on continuing with your maintenance programmes as the village generally looked very well on adjudication day. In terms of improvements, the committee should explore the option of providing more permanent beds with perennial and evergreen planting in the village for the years ahead. There seems to be a slight over reliance on planters and seasonal flowering plants and this can lead to excessive use of water for maintenance (unless sufficient amounts of rainwater can be harvested) and an absence of landscaping schemes that provide year-round colour.

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

We are delighted to read that the committee has provided new signage for the Forest walk and that this amenity is proving popular with both walking groups and families. This demonstrates that the project was very worthwhile, as it has helped to raise local awareness of biodiversity on your doorstep and provided residents of the village with a fantastic amenity that is much appreciated. Given that this project has been a great success, we would urge you to look for other ways of improving it. Is interpretive signage planned for this route? Why not try and link your Forest Walk to other walks in the county (such as the Monaghan way) as this could result in additional tourists coming to visit. We noted that the schoolchildren in the village both enjoy the Forest Walk and understand its importance and we wondered if they would be interested in carrying out a survey of wildlife along the walk or along a section of the walk? This survey could then be used to monitor whether the biodiversity is being maintained, or enhanced or worsening over time. Regrettably, we are unable to find the starting point of the Forest Walk during adjudication and we were surprised to see that this did not appear to be marked on the map you supplied. Please ensure that it is marked on the map for 2016. Well done on planting the wildflowers in the village as these are favoured by pollinators and be sure to keep us up-to-date with any further projects under this category in 2016.

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

This category has increased in importance in recent years and now counts for 50 marks in the competition – which is the same number of marks available under the built environment, landscaping and open spaces and wildlife categories. Given that your marks are lower under this category than others, it represents an excellent opportunity for Rockcorry to improve its performance in the competition. Your entry form states that the local schools are involved in the Green Flag Initiatives, the local bring bank is widely used and that the schoolchildren have bring and buy sales to reduce waste and encourage recycling. However, as these projects were also presented in 2014, it is considered that more could be done. For example, does your committee engage in waste minimisation and elimination when carrying out its own tidy towns projects by making your own compost, growing your own plants, harvesting rainwater (for watering purposes) and using recycled materials (such as waste timber) in your planting schemes? These simple actions are effective at reducing the amount of waste generated and they enable your committee to lead by example. Other ideas for projects under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Litter control was generally good during adjudication but we were surprised to find that small amounts of litter can be found in a number of isolated locations. Litter could be observed on the approach road from Bally Bay, in the Claremont residential area, at the playground in Cranmore, on the Clones approach road and along Back Lane. Whilst all instances of litter were single items or very small numbers of items, it detracted a little from your overall performance. The playground in Cranmore had a noticeable amount of litter and it is recommended that this area is considered a blackspot and that it receives extra attention during your litter patrols. Well done on involving the schools in your litter control activities and we urge you to continue to do so as anti litter awareness is the key to solving this problem. The standard of tidiness was generally good with very few instances of weed to be spotted while the new signage looked well. Perhaps not surprisingly, there is still room for improvement. A number of signs seem to have escaped your attention and they are in need of maintenance – they included the black and yellow children about road sign, the road sign warning of deer in the village and the 50 kmph signs on the Newbliss approach road. The black-and-white bilingual directional road signs (for example for Monaghan and Ballybay close to the village green) were in quite poor condition and may need to be replaced. A number of untidy field gates were also spotted on the Newbliss road.

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

The standard of residential estates in Rockcorry was generally good with the residential areas of Hilltop and the Square looking particularly well. We particularly liked the green area at the entrance to the Square with its trimmed

grass, attractive planting, new name sign and stone features. The Hilltop residential area immediately beside the Square also looked very well and we were delighted to find that the seats in this location provided excellent views of the surrounding countryside. We were delighted to see that the residents of Dartrey Court provided a permanent planting bed but it was not planted at the time of adjudication. Is this a work in progress? The mature residential area of Bohyer (opposite Cranmore) looked very well and individual houses and gardens achieved a very high standard of presentation. We note that you are currently working with the residents of Cranmore and Claremont Rise to improve their estates and that new signage has been provided. Both were viewed during adjudication and they are considered to have great potential.

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

Your 'adopt a road' scheme sounds like an excellent initiative and it appears to be working as the standard of the approach roads into Rockcorry was very good. The committee is commended on the provision of decorative timber welcome signage on all approach roads as it significantly enhances the entrance to your village and provides for a positive first impression for the visitor. Verge maintenance and planting on all approach roads was considered to be good and we loved the mature trees on the Ballybay and Clones approaches. The Newbliss approach was a little untidy looking due to the presence of dead grass along one of the roadside banks and we wondered if this was the result of an overzealous use of weed killer? The semi-mature trees on the Back Lane approach road also looked well.

Concluding Remarks:

We would like to commend the committee on another good performance in the tidy towns competition and we look forward to returning in 2016. Keep up the good work!