

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Scotshouse** Ref: **1218**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **251**
Category: **A** Date(s): **16/07/2015**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	35	38
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	32	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	32	34
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10	11
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	48	50
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	30	30
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	26	27
TOTAL MARK	450	238	251

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are delighted to welcome Scotshouse and its dedicated committee of 8 members to the 2015 tidy towns competition as your involvement is appreciated. We know from your entry form that your committee have been working extremely hard on projects and consulting with relevant groups and project partners (in 31 different meetings!). However, we are hopeful that your partnership approach the competition will make a positive difference as you have attracted funding, resources and sponsorship from a range of different agencies, bodies and businesses that include Monaghan County Council, the Heritage Council, the Clones Bally Bay Municipal District, Supervalu Clones and a range of local businesses (Scots house quarries and Connollys shop) as well as local residents. Your communication strategy seems comprehensive and you are commended on using social media as there is no doubt that this extends the reach of your committee. Have you considered developing an online presence such as a website? Well done on involving the school in a number of your projects and its likely that this collaboration has been positive. Congratulations on your achievement in winning the Endeavour award in 2014 which appears to be richly deserved. Thank you for your completed and concise entry form, map and attached photos as it was very helpful during adjudication. In many ways, your adjudicator considered that your entry documentation should form a model for other tidy towns groups elsewhere. Your tidy towns action plan was read with interest and it appears to be very comprehensive and practical document and we are pleased to see that your making so much progress in getting so many of the identified projects completed.

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

The adjudicator welcomed the opportunity to visit the village of Scotshouse for the first time and to view your many projects (both ongoing and completed) at first hand. It is great to see that the work on establishing a new village Park is progressing apace with major steps on the road achieve this year (with leases being agreed, drainage being resolved and infilling taking place). This is an excellent location for a Park as it will form a central focal point for your village and it enjoys a favourable south-westerly aspect. There are some attractive buildings in your village with the Catholic Church dominating the streetscape from its elevated site while Connollys also looked very well with its fresh coat of paint. We loved the traditional design and redbrick of the Rectory and the simple but appealing design of St Andrews Church of Ireland. It is noted that the Church of Ireland School Building is in poor condition but the committee is commended on boarding up its windows to protect and conserve the structure and prevent further water egress and deterioration. The committee is commended on the improvements they have undertaken to the boundary treatment with the new timber fences (around the Church of Ireland Rectory site and on the approach from Clones) observed. We also agree with your decision to plant hedgerows on the vacant sites on the Community Centre road. There's no doubt that the derelict or vacant sites that are visible in the village present a challenge and we would encourage you to consult with Monaghan County Council on this matter as they have the necessary powers (under the Derelict Sites Act) to compel the owners to act and take the necessary remedial action. Well

done on securing funding from the Heritage Council and for restoring the dry stone walls on the Cavanreagh road as this is a very worthy project. Your negotiations with Monaghan County Council to provide a new footpath are also acknowledged.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

We enjoyed viewing the attractive landscaping projects in Scotshouse during adjudication. The landscaping on the junction of the Drum and Clones approach roads was very nice and it helped to enhance this important entry point to your village. The colourful landscaping bed on the Cavan approach road also looked very well and we wondered if all approach roads could be provided with similar landscaping beds. A highlight for the adjudicator was the lovely colourful and bright summer planting that could be found around the pump and the seating area in the green in the centre of the village (which is also the location of the proposed Park). Colourful planters could also be seen at either side of the entrance door to the Community Centre and we wondered if additional landscaping could be provided in this location - perhaps along the front roadside boundary as this would help to brighten up the car park and form a distinct boundary with the road. The committee is commended on its work maintaining and planting hedgerows on the road leading to the community centre and these will look particularly well when they mature in time. Your efforts on removing ivy from trees and the heritage stone wall is also acknowledged and we are pleased to read that you have been engaged in native wildflower planting on approach roads but regrettably, this was not immediately visible during adjudication. Nonetheless, it is to be commended and we would encourage you to continue with this project in 2016. For next year, consider varying the planting schemes to include some perennials as this will help you to achieve year-round colour and may help to reduce the maintenance requirements of the beds.

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

We were delighted to read that your committee is proactive on undertaking training on wildlife, native plants, trees management and wall maintenance and this is sure to place you in good stead when undertaking future tidy towns projects. The committee is commended on its focussed approach to maintaining existing hedgerows and planting new ones throughout the village as they provide a very attractive form of boundary treatment and serve as a valuable source of food and shelter for wildlife and birdlife. We are also pleased to see that determined efforts are being made to maintain and conserve the trees. Your hedgerow and tree projects are very strategic (and visionary!) as together they should form the 'spine' of your wildlife corridor through the village and hopefully contribute to its future success. Well done on your stream maintenance programme and we are relieved to see that you have sought expert advice on this programme as streams are extremely sensitive habitats and it is often the case that cleaning by untrained groups or individuals can do more harm than good. We were very interested to read about your proposed amenity area for the village and your determined efforts to fund raise and make this happen. This sounds like a wonderful project and we wish you every success with it.

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

This category often causes problems with tidy towns groups as many struggle to find innovative ways to achieve waste minimisation and elimination and sustainable resource use in their own activities and in their communities. This is despite the fact that the category has now been allocated 50 marks in the competition – the same number as built environment is, landscaping and wildlife. We are pleased to see that your committee is having no such problems understanding the kind of projects that are required for this category. Well done on working closely with the school on waste minimisation and sustainable resource use projects and it is great to read that you are working closely with groups such as the ICA on waste minimisation and the community centre on sustainable resource use. However, don't forget to tell us about what the committee does to minimise and eliminate waste when carrying out its day-to-day projects. Why not organise a waste minimisation seminar for the village? This could be undertaken with the assistance of the Environmental Awareness Officer of Monaghan County Council. Should you need them, further ideas for projects under this category can be found in the tidy towns handbook.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is clear from your entry form that there is a big focus on this category with numerous projects carried out in 2015. We are delighted to say that your village performed particularly well under this category with virtually no litter bins spotted in the village on adjudication day. Aside from some items of litter in Scotshouse Close and a single can on the Clones approach road, your village was litter free. This is an excellent performance and it reflects the hard work of the committee in the weeks and months leading up to adjudication day. The standard of tidiness was also high and your diligent approach to weed removal can clearly be seen in the neat and tidy roadsides and footpaths throughout the village. Some improvements are possible for 2016. The front boundary wall of the structure adjacent to the vacant Gala shop is quite weedy at the base and this detracted somewhat from this approach. The cemetery wall looked neat and tidy (following the power washing) but the verge beside it was quite weedy and untidy looking. The Pub looked very well but it could be further improved by painting the black railing around the car park and the black corrugated gate to the side. The community centre car park was in reasonable shape but weed growth was starting to return.

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

We are pleased to read that the committee is working closely with all residential areas in the village to ensure a consistent approach to estate management in Scotshouse. The residential areas were considered to be nice and while it was clear that the green areas in each case are regularly trimmed, there is still room for improvement. In Cavanreagh, the green area to the front of the housing area was a little untidy looking due to extensive weed growth in the bed beneath the black timber fence and the pleasant seating areas would benefit from a coat of paint. In

Scotshouse Close, the mature trees and bring bank looked well but the landscaped bed at the entrance was weedy and in need of attention. In Oaklands, the name stone was in danger of being obscured by growth and weed could be seen at the kerbs along the entrance road.

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

The approach roads into the village were generally good and the landscaping on the Cavan and Clones approach roads was impressive but not all approaches achieved the same standard. The speed limit signage on the Drum approach road is missing on one side and the pole is very untidy looking while the name sign is in danger of being overgrown by grass. Similarly, the Redhills approach road was a little untidy looking as a result of overgrown verges. Perhaps the committee will consider maintaining a short section of the verge and leaving the rest for wildflowers? This would provide for a much tidier appearance and facilitate your wildflower projects.

Concluding Remarks:

We were most impressed with the work that has been undertaken in Scotshouse for 2015 and we are delighted to see that significant progress is being made on the village Park. Keep up the good work and we look forward to returning to review your progress in 2016.