

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Strokestown** Ref: **715**
County: **Roscommon** Mark: **229**
Category: **B** Date(s): **10/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	31	32
The Built Environment	50	30	31
Landscaping	50	30	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	19	20
Litter Control	50	25	25
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	12	12
Tidiness	30	16	16
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29	29
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	225	229

Overall Development Approach:

Your adjudicator would like to welcome back Strokestown to the 2013 National TidyTowns Competition.

You included your strategic plan and it was good to note that this is based on the Strokestown Local Area Plan which was developed through public consultation. You plan to work closely with local schools, The GAA, The Historical Society and the Community Development Association. You also hope to have more people involved in the future. One way may be to link directly with the School which had its Green Flag flying proudly. Or you could circulate your strategic plan to key groups and ask for comment/input on other actions, not just with the litter side of the competition. You have commenced work with the Heritage Officer and other staff of the County Council and these links this should be nurtured.

The Built Environment:

There have been a great number of new developments around the edges of Strokestown including the schools, health centre and primary care centre which is great to see the investment in the area. But meanwhile it is sad to see the number of buildings unoccupied in particular those more traditional buildings on the main street. Strokestown is an important village architecturally and where possible this should be highlighted through talks, guided walks and good planning as you have outlined in your long-term strategy.

Congratulations should be extended to the businesses that run from many of these period properties on the main street including the Bank of Ireland, Solicitors, SSS and the private home owners here also.

Even keeping the original fixtures on front doors looked great including door knobs and letter slots. The red brick and wooden eaves of the Bank of Ireland presented very well. There are also some lovely cornices on the house opposite the Weigh bridge. Nearby Doherty Meats had a nice sign over the doors and its carriageway was maintained. -

Perhaps a national policy can be adopted to promote the re-use of older buildings? It is a shame to see the Court House no longer used but at least the roof appears intact. Can the community consider other ways in which to attract business back to the main street to keep such buildings open? You do have one such great example - it was a delight to have a cuppa and an enormous slice of cake in the newly opened Comfy café. This community

run café is based inside a protected structure which even has the original safe in place as it was originally a bank.

The Garda Station was quite a modern structure compared to most buildings in Strokestown and was freshly painted.

The SCDA has been instrumental in erecting plaques on many of the buildings on the main streets. But your adjudicator was surprised to find that no information was provided by the weigh bridge. Whilst works to upgrade this structure have been requested, you should also consider erecting even a sign in the window here stating what it was and how it worked. Two lovely traditional styled commercial premises were noted on Elphin street including Sheehan's Chemist and the beautifully presented Beirne's lounge and grocery with the lovely swirls detailing their wares.

The council yard next to the bottle bank is in a very poor presentation and should be addressed. Barbed wire is rusty and hanging over in places. A lot of homes have PVC windows installed that are not good matches to the buildings. Some guidance should be circulated on this to home owners as appropriate.

Landscaping:

The central roundabout is well landscaped and the hanging baskets surrounding this look well and appropriate to the town. Thus your adjudicator feels that you could remove the additional planters from here.

Hanley's Bar and the Percy French Hotel were both nicely presented with lovely hanging baskets or window boxes. It was lovely to see many of the private home owners with window boxes or planters positioned outside their homes.

The new raised stone beds at the entrance to Kildalogue heights was admired and looked well. It is recommended not to underplant trees with flowers as this can draw nutrients away from the trees, so this is a great alternative.

There are some nice shrubs and trees planted at Caislin Way including a weeping willow and evergreens. The tree supports should be removed as they are now damaging the trees here. Perhaps some honeysuckle could be encouraged to grow on the fencing here to screen the gas tanks, and also by the fence on the new community child care facility?

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You plan to have talks and events to raise awareness of the natural heritage, some maybe at the river. This is to be encouraged and it was good to note that you have not strimmed right down to the water's edge but provided some natural cover here.

You have a problem with invasive species in the town. Giant hogweed is growing all over the rear garden of a house on Bawn Street and it has spread to the base of one of the street lamps here. This is a health hazard and causes serious welts on skin upon contact. Contact the county council or www.invasivespeciesireland.com for more details. There is also Japanese knotweed behind homes that you can see entering Caislin Way – possibly caused through contaminated building material being dumped here at some stage.

You mentioned in our strategic plan the locality of cSAC Annaghmore Lough to Strokestown. This means that the habitats and wildlife found here are so important and unique across Europe that they have been afforded protection at a European level. A talk or guided walk in the vicinity highlight the wildlife here could be a good action to carry out during Heritage Week in August each year.

Walking through the town young swallows were seen peaking over the mud nest at the gable end of the house at Caislin Way – a sign of good luck!

Some birdboxes could be made by the local youth club and erected in the gardens by the grotto for the community.

Litter Control:

It was good to see the photographs of the students from Scoil Mhuire who helped with the spring clean. Some cardboard boxes were left at the Bottle Bank and glass was noted there also but it was quite fresh litter. Litter was congregating at the back of the old health centre and had been there for some time so this should be addressed. -

Bottles were noticed down the side of the Bank of Ireland and the receipts bin at the cash dispenser was overflowing.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Well done on taking part and promoting the Waste Electrical Equipment (WEE) day. The school would be able to come up with many ideas for this aspect of the competition including book rental schemes, bring and buy sales and text alert messaging all of which help to reduce resources.

Tidiness:

Some cable ties were noticed on lamp posts and watch out for Christmas lights in place all year round.

There was a large area at the entrance to Forge Hill which looked unmanaged. By simply mowing just the edges of this area it will appear cared for and allow wildlife to feed on nectar in flowers etc.

Residential Areas:

Two homes opposite the tractor garage on Church Street looked excellent painted dark and light grey with attention to detail in the painting of the decorative brick here. Hartland House is beautifully presented and it was also good to see the traditional flagstones being carefully reinstated here.

Kildalogue estate appeared very welcoming and cared for with its flowers, trees and raised planters. The shrubbery bed at the entrance to Shelvin had some recent additions to it which also looked good and homes here were well presented.

There was no street name for the Caislin Way.

It was a shame that there was a fenced off home just at the entrance to the estate by the Sports Centre – this estate should have a name displayed. What is the status of this property? You should be in discussions with the Local Authority on this property. Homes and communal areas of Tower View were very well presented including number 12.

Six homes on the Roscommon Road were boarded off nicely and presented well despite being a ghost development. What are the long-term plans for these buildings?

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

It was great to see the many carriage arches at the side of homes and businesses on the main streets. The roads at the GAA, School and Sports Complex were in bad condition with many potholes. This is the results of works recently completed here but now these approach roads should be addressed. There is an alleyway at the side of a house opposite the bottle banks which has some lovely gates in situ which should be straightened and painted.

The village pump on the Roscommon Road needs some landscaping as does the hard shoulder in front of the closed commercial premises opposite the grotto. These areas would be ideal for growing wild flowers without the addition of any topsoil as they are very nutrient poor.

General Impression:

There are so many beautiful buildings in Strokestown it is recommended that you walk around just looking up at upper stories and see great attention to detail that you rarely find in modern premises now. There is much to be proud about in Strokestown and it is good that the Tidy Towns Committee is getting more active and hopes to involve more in its work. Keep this up – well done.