

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tullamore** Ref: **727**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **306**
Category: **F** Date(s): **13/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	44
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	31
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	38
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39
TOTAL MARK	450	306

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

The adjudicator welcomes Tullamore to the 2014 Tidy Towns competition and thank you for your well detailed submission and annotated map which this year included project locations on the outer margins of the town. This was a great help on adjudication day and thank you for providing this as requested in last years report. For a large urban centre you have an active committee of 15 members drawn from a varied cross section of the community. You seem to enjoy a fruitful partnership with the Local Authority and Town Council and various agencies and bodies both in the town and nationally. You have been successful in gaining sponsorship for your work including your sponsorship of the town's roundabouts. Your continued good relations with the local schools and your support of their work is also to your credit. Your structured approach to the competition has meant that you have addressed and are developing projects in all categories of the competition and your subcommittee structure is also working well with particular emphasis on wildlife and sustainability. In particular you seem to be successful in liaising with the residents associations in the city. This is great to see and gives you and the competition a real link to the town's local residents both for support and to advertise your projects. Good luck with progressing your website and facebook page as these can be a valuable method of reaching younger members of the community and may help you gain additional volunteers for your annual events including the spring clean and Grand Canal clean.

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

The new Tullamore Civic Offices on the road to the railway station are very impressive and has there been any consideration as to a new use for the old classical offices given their prominent position looking over the wonderful new park. The forecourt here would seem to be a perfect spot for a Christmas or regular farmers market with close proximity to the car park and a play area for kids to run off steam after the shopping trip. It is a shame to see such a fine building closed off from public use. The railings to the front here need attention and a coat of paint. Other prominent premises admired were the well maintained frontage of Flynns bakery, Meanarys modern landmark building and the well designed shop front of Silver River Interiors in a lovely old stone warehouse. It was surprising to see so many of the older commercial stone warehouses in the town still in use and active. The work done to the Tullamore Dew centre and the boardwalk here is a prime example of this. Also admired was the impressive Georgian townhouse in use by Donal Farrelly and Sons and the well presented roundhouse across the road here. Your schools were also a delight so well done to all involved in fostering a sense of pride in their surroundings for your younger citizens. Best of luck in promoting your business incentive scheme. The emphasis you are putting on the impact a whole streetscape has in encouraging pedestrians to visit and so benefit the whole street is seen in your best business streets incentive. It is such a pity street trees were not included in the O'Carrol Street works but the removal of overhead wires makes such a difference here. The temporary trees make a great impression as you look down Columkille Street and try to ensure some are included in any future works here to underground cables. Placing an emphasis on the quality of pedestrian life in the town was noted throughout the submission from the

investment in new bridges to your proposed introduction of pedestrian friendly areas in the town. Good luck with all your future works.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The new town park is such a lovely asset for your town and well done to all involved in its development and how well existing trees had been incorporated into the new park design on a challenging sloped site. The water feature was a magnet for local children and needs constant attention to ensure the water quality is kept high with the water acting as a magnet for windblown litter. Some of the trees were showing signs of damage. New trees in areas of high activity could have their trunks protected with bamboo wraps if this continues to be a problem. The signage at the entrance to the park was informative and very well designed and positioned. Remove tree ties from low stakes here.

The canal is such an asset for the town and the new bridges allow full enjoyment of its banks and better connectivity for pedestrians. Burg Bridge set in simple grass banks was a delight and perhaps as part of your future works with Waterways Ireland the black pipe to the frontage could be removed. While a few life ring stands were rusty and could do with a coat of paint all were in place and none vandalized. The statue at the start of Fiona's way was very moving. Extend the hedge here to screen the concrete block wall. We look forward to seeing works commencing at the gate to the Charleville estate soon.

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

The habitat management plan and the baseline study to be done as part of your wildlife audit will be very valuable documents for you to have, and we look forward to seeing a considered and structured plan of action emerging based on this study. This will allow you have a baseline study of what is present in your locality so you can begin to assess what actions need to be taken to either protect or improve the habitats identified. Have you considered developing a programme of workshops with the primary schools or youth groups to get them involved in the works in this category? The worm bin and compost area was nicely sited in the town park and well maintained. It was a pity to see the grass margins at the canal railing being chemically sprayed so close to a sensitive waterway and it also looks very unattractive. Can this be managed by strimming or hand weeding instead?

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

St Josephs green school rap was a great introduction to all the initiatives you have carried out under this category. In addition to being a fine architectural addition to the town with its nicely detailed facade it is good to see sustainability issues were considered at the design stage of Colaiste Choilm. Your schools participation in the Green Schools programme seems to have been a great success. Well done to all student and staff for the commitment shown. The commitments you are putting into promoting alternative modes of transport is also noted by ensuring bike stands are available at key spots in the town. The scoot on Wednesday initiative by St Josephs is a new way of approaching this and we hope lots of scooters were seen on the streets on that day. When your website has been completed make sure you include a page on practical tips residents can use to apply the ethos of this category into their everyday life. A weekly email with a new tip each week could be a possibility.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your weekly litter picks as the adjudicator was happy to see very little litter in the core town area on adjudication day. The tidy tullamore initiative seems to have been a success for you. These kinds of high profile schemes are a great way to get the anti litter message across. Have you considered doing an audit of the number and position of bins in the town? For example at the entrance to the car park at Spollens pub two bins are placed almost side by side. And in the open space at Kearney Park near Fionas Way, three old concrete bins, all empty on the day of the visit, were placed on a semi private residential open space. And at one of the busiest spots in town, the bench by the bridge at the hotel, no bin was present. And this spot was one of the few places litter was noted. It may be timely to review bin locations as the removal of excess bins can also improve the streetscape by removing clutter and creating more room for pedestrians. While the lower street level facades of many of your buildings are well maintained make sure the upper floors are not neglected, especially on side streets. Some letters from signage were missing at the Bank of Ireland and Barry Cowens office, very noticeable given their prominent position in the town.

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

Well done to all the resident associations on the hard work they carry out over the year. You do not mention if you also hold an annual tidy estates competition. This type of competition is a great way to keep the momentum going; healthy competition is always a good way to get residents motivated! Check tree ties and stakes on trees planted as part of open space planting in newer estates. Ties should be loosened or removed as a tree grows as a scar from a tight or rubbing tree tie leaves a tree susceptible to disease. Ties can usually be removed after 2-3 years or once a tree is stable. The open space and back lanes at Kearney Park were well kept and the colourful beds of roses and lupins do much to add to the setting here. Trees were maturing nicely at Arbutus court and dead trees should be removed at Marions Place and new trees planted, perhaps using funds as part of the community grant scheme. There were some lovely individual gardens noted through out the town with one particular rose filled garden at Kilbride Street admired.

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

Signage clutter has been reduced at the industrial estates but there is some ways to go with excessive signage on the Kinnity Road but we note this is an issue in the submission you recognise needs attention. As part of the works to Charleveille Gate can the signage here also be addressed? One wonders how effective the town parking signs are given the rates are too small to be read by passing motorists. Consider removing these as most people will now expect to pay parking in central town centre locations and rates should be posted only at the car parking areas. Road markings at High Street and Columkille Street were poor and needed to be redone especially at pedestrian crossings. While publicizing a civic scheme this adjudicator felt the temporary banners/flags along the upper floors of the core town commercial street only cluttered by the street and the smaller signs in shop windows publicised the scheme more effectively. The use of good quality materials – stone setts and kerbs, at pedestrian areas in the town was admired. The streetscape works at the junction of Convent Road and Columkille Street, at the library and opposite the Town Council all used the same materials and shows good understanding of the design of the public realm. Ensure all futures works to pedestrian areas follow this simple palette and design standard for a consistent quality of streetscape.