

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal** Ref: **37**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **325**
Category: **B** Date(s): **23/07/2016**
10/08/2016

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	46	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	20	20
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	34	35
TOTAL MARK	450	322	325

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Clonegal is most welcome to the 2016 Tidy Towns competition. many thanks your entry form. The adjudicator was surprised that this was not accompanied with a three-year plan which is expected at this level of the contest. Perhaps you were in between plans but do update us on this matter next year. Clonegal holds a very high standing in the contest and this can be attributed to the high standards set by the people of the community. Well done on all the work you have put in this year. The adjudicator found your application form to be overly verbose. What is really looked for is a brief description – perhaps only one or two lines – on projects which had been undertaken during this judging period. Too much descriptive text or projects which are older than one year can serve to distract from where points are to be awarded. A more succinct entry for 2017 would surely cut down on your work as well as making things clearer for the adjudicator. Your map this year successfully included a key and thank you for this. Ideally there would only be one map and this would be separate from your form. Unfortunately this year we had to remove maps again from their binding. These points are put forward in a spirit of constructive criticism and in no way should take from the wonderful work you have been doing.

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

The new footpath opposite the community centre is a great visual enhancement in this area as well as a material safety improvement for pedestrians. You mentioned the detached building which had its plaster removed – note that traditional buildings were not meant to have stonework exposed while plaster is likely beneficial in keeping moisture out of grouting. Well done for removing the old petrol pump and this better reveals the splendid shop front. Your walking tour brochure was reviewed with interest and is a nice addition for this year. The old photo is a particular point of interest, the streetscape has not changed all that much! The castle is truly stunning, what a spot. Newish information signs for Carlow tourism is located on the back wall of the entrance and this is a very obscure location. The village centre retains all of the charm and interest the Tidy Towns judges have come to expect. There is no need to list every feature as its all fabulous. New for this year is the copy of the Proclamation and beautiful surrounds. Excellent work although the laurel will need considerable maintenance so it doesn't swamp the other features. The school is magnificent quite a joy it must be to learn in it. At the church another immaculate presentation. Your award cabinet in the windows of PJ Dunne tells its own story.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The project at the Weavers cottages is a wonderful heritage undertaking. There is also lots to be learned about the volume of produce the can be produced close to home (a waste minimisation initiative perhaps). The arched bridge, river and abundant tall trees are the linchpins of landscaping in Clonegal. Other highlights are the uniformity of style and colour which you have employed to such good effect. The stone bed near the river is especially eye-catching.

We paid a visit to the Garden Haven and what a sight! The little park marking the trail head of the Wicklow Way once again taxes the superlative. Our only suggestion is that the stone marking the Entente Florale could be cleaned up to freshen its appearance.

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

It's great that you are undertaking actions under the national pollinator plan. The national biodiversity data centre has recently published a version for homeowners/gardeners and these may be useful to refer to in addition to those from the Royal Horticultural Society. It's fabulous that the schoolchildren are able to express their enthusiasm for nature which all children have. Well done to parents and teachers for encouraging this. Well done also for attending the event with the Irish Wildlife Trust, it is important to continually be trying to raise awareness of nature, its value and the pressures it is under. The project at Ben Mulhall Park especially caught the eye, are there particular birds you are hoping to attract? Do let us know next year how successful it has been. Are there any plans to deal with Himalayan Balsam at the river?

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

The school's green flag work is so important in this category and the teachers and students are warmly congratulated on their fantastic progress to date. Recycling is more or less a given these days and the focus needs to shift onto reducing quantities of materials becoming waste to start with. Car pooling, rainwater harvesting and composting are great examples of projects and you should try to build on these. You list a number of initiatives for the reuse of used items and this is also useful. As such you have a number of strands to this area and your task is to be continuously building on this to change rooted behaviours. For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your community is full of champions who won't pass a piece of litter without picking it up. You also took part in the national spring clean and this is excellent. This paragraph is necessarily short as no litter was seen and no particular tidiness issues noted. If we had to mention something it would be the machinery store behind the Wicklow Way Park which is quite ugly – but perhaps most people don't see this. Sadly the adjudicator is paid to see these things! Even the bring bank was successfully screened with scented flowers.

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

The granite stone at the Watch House Village creates a great impression at this fine estate of homes. This is a vast area of grass to be maintained. Is this necessary or is there scope to allow a meadow to develop over the summer? This would save on resources as well as creating some space for flowers and pollinators. At Moyacomb Meadow the presentation is eye-popping, surely as good as any this adjudicator has seen anywhere. Well done for all the effort that must go into maintaining this area. St. Brigid's Tce was admired for its trees and stone carving.

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

Coming from Kildavin there is a welcome sign on arrival to the village and all is attractive and well here. Another sign is located at the bridge, is this necessary? It would be great to see a path constructed over the bridge as a safety measure. It would be nice to clean the 1798 plaque. The display at the watch house is superb but hanging baskets are not required and risk overdoing it. The old pump here needs to be washed and shrubbery cut back.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a joy to spend some time in Clonegal and the eye is distracted at every turn with some new attraction or display of colour. What a show, well done and keep up the good work.

Second Round Adjudication:

Clonegal celebrates 18 years of involvement with the national Tidy Towns competition. Arriving into the village, stone walls were lovely and it was great to see natural ferns on these. You have a light touch in many places where you work with the natural settings and this looked very well. It is important not to 'manicure' areas too tightly. The mature trees at the riverside are wonderful and should be nurtured and the wildlife board looked good following its makeover. A fence behind here could do with some attention. Watch the use of different styles of stones, ornaments and highly polished stones in your rural setting.

Landscaped beds such as at the entrance to Watch House Village were just lovely consisting of a nice mixture of flowers and shrubs providing pollen to our pollinators. As mentioned by the first adjudicator, maybe more of the tightly mown grass area could be allowed to grow and flower? Likewise, there was large expanse of grass in front of homes at Valley View – maybe allow some of this to grow longer to benefit wildlife whilst also looking good if the edges were mowed? Hydrangeas at the entrance to Valley View estate looked nice but offer little in terms of benefits for wildlife.

Everywhere your beds looked very well. Do keep a watchful eye on the montbretia. It looks fantastic but it is classed as a secondary invasive species so can easily spread. The Watch House road has a lot of planters and baskets. Sometimes less is more as you have a beautiful environment and there is no need to have planters and baskets everywhere. Embrace your natural settings. It was good to see so many water butts on properties.

Some litter was noticed in the lower riverside pathway.

St Fiac's Church looked very well and the landscaped bed here was lovely too. There was a lot of mowing right

past the 80km sign. It was felt there was no need to mow so far along here. The flower bed on the side of the road opposite the Church looked very well.

The main buildings in Clonegal looked well including the school, church and the Post Office – well done on removing the petrol pumps from here- that's a big job. The community gardens were lovely and the hand-written sign looked well. Some slug pellets were noticed in the polytunnel– hopefully there were not in use and to be fair they were dusty on the bottom shelf! The abundant crops here should make for a great harvest. Under tidiness the large metal posts that protruded above the TidyTowns awards signs took away from here and should be shortened.

The volunteer who showed us around the Weaver's cottage was an excellent guide. It was amazing that this could be open most of the time. The use of this by the community for functions, workshops and clubs is to be commended and supported to ensure it remains a sustainable resource for the community.

We look forward to your long-term plan next year and to see how you can incorporate actions from the pollination workshop in more of your landscaping schemes. Thank you for a lovely day exploring Clonegal.