

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal** Ref: **37**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **328**
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/07/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	47	47
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	37	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	36
TOTAL MARK	450	325	328

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Clonegal to the 2017 Tidy Towns competition, many thanks for your entry. As requested by last year's adjudicator, you have managed to reduce the volume of text in your application by 40%. Well done. You could even strip some more from the application, eg. National figures on food waste. To further improve your application, please look at the numbering of projects in the application and on the map. Numbering should continue through each category, not restart. You should only have one project 1. The colour coding is of great benefit. As a further suggestion, maybe use a light blue (or other colour) in next year's entry, as the colour for Community Involvement and Planning was very similar to Residential Streets and Housing Areas. If the key was on the same side of the page as the map it would be easier to read also. This might be achieved by getting rid of row 5 or using an A3 sheet. The grid reference is also very useful for finding your projects. Please also indicate when projects started, finished or are ongoing.

You have very good connections throughout your community and beyond. Well done on tapping into multiple local authorities for assistance. It is great to see that you involve children in your work. The addition of a three year plan was most welcome in assessing your vision for your village over the coming years. The photographs were very helpful in locating your projects.

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

Your village is truly blessed with the many fine buildings and the blending of old and new, whilst keeping local building lines and street enclosure intact. To name some, Sha-Roe Bistro, Osborne, MJ Hickey, PJ Dunne, Sean O'Duinn, and Siopa Ui Dhuinn were all admired. Timber sash windows add a great deal of the character to these buildings, so please encourage their upkeep and when the time comes, encourage owners to replace PVC windows with timber. It is not surprising that your village was recently chosen as a film set. The multiple subtle sculptures were admired and were a pleasant surprise on my visit. The paving along the river at the viewpoint needs some attention to trip hazards and crumbling jointing. If complete repaving is possible, consider taking inspiration from the kerbing, paving and drainage detail outside Siopa Ui Duinn. This paving detail should be the inspiration for future upgrades/replacements in the village. Use stone wherever possible as it adds immense character and lasts for generations. If a complete repaving is not possible in the short term consider using smaller paving units (setts) where roots are causing damage, as the smaller units can accommodate small amounts of movement better than large paving units.

In public areas, try to stick with one colour for street furniture (seats, bins, railings etc) as this will create a unified appearance. The different colours used at the river viewing point give a bit of a disjointed feel. Use a colour that tonally contrasts with the background to aid people with poor vision. Black is not a good colour to use in many situations. Refer to the National Disability Authority publication "Access – Improving the accessibility of historic buildings and places" for further guidance. Well done on the cleaning and painting here and the new back gate and

arch.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You have magnificent trees in Clonegal, many planted a long time ago. In order to help continue the special character that trees of this vintage can give to a place you need to look now at the long term management of the existing trees and look at locations for replacements. The trees that give the special sense of place are large when fully grown and require lots of room so choose locations carefully and look up and close by for overhead wires before planting. Don't just plant trees, but choose carefully and use the existing large tree species as your palette. Choose suitable cultivar of these species where necessary if space is limited. It would be great to see the existing trees identified, photographed, girth measured and a visual survey of the trees done for any sign of decline/dieback, fungus growth, wildlife present. Some of this you probably can do yourselves and/or with the help of children. This will act as a baseline and record for the future management. You may find The Tree Council of Ireland publication, "Amenity Trees and Woodlands: A Guide to their Management in Ireland" a help in this. You may also find it beneficial for entering the Tree Project Award within the Tidy Towns competition. It was disappointing to hear of the loss of your Community Garden, but what struck this adjudicator was that you have the makings of a "community garden" with all the well tended private gardens on view and the public open spaces/gardens dotted around your village. The Weavers Cottages garden and An Seomra Ranga sa Chlós are wonderful to see. Some planting of holly along the boundary with the machinery store at the Wicklow Way Park would help to screen the view.

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

Your wild edge opposite St. Brigid's Terrace looked amazing on adjudication day. As a suggestion maybe copy the style of planting on the opposite side of the road, behind the stud fence, to create a "wildlife avenue" on this approach into the village.

Last year's adjudicator mentioned that you were undertaking actions under the National Pollinator Plan, but there is no specific mention of these in your application. Next year please highlight the actions that you have taken. Ben Mulhall Park and the bank at Watch House Village were visited and the many species of butterfly, birds, and insects were noted. The path junction with the meadow at Watch House Village would visually benefit from a regular single pass of a lawnmower (approx. 1m wide) to show that the meadow is intentional and maintained. The fact that this meadow adjoins a native hedgerow helps greatly in terms of its biodiversity value. Try to identify similar sites. If you plan to keep this meadow long term maybe plant a sweep of a few random hawthorn trees 5-20m apart along the top portion of the bank. The large grassed open spaces in this estate are full of clover and other pollinator friendly plants. Could some of the steeper parts around the perimeters be allowed to grow as a meadow also?

With regard to the Himalayan Balsam, well done on getting advice from CAISIE, but also look at invasivespeciesireland.com under the management tab for details of how to control its spread.

Well done on connecting with the Institute of Technology Carlow for advice with regard to the swan nesting. Maybe your insect and hedgerow hotels could be moved to some of the other public open spaces to further raise awareness.

Your future plans for the village needs to look at the village as a whole and in this regard a basic habitat survey would be of great benefit as a base point and help to make informed decisions on how to develop projects for this and the landscape and open spaces categories. See http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf or https://greenschoolsireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Habitat_mapping.pdf for information. You may be able to get assistance from ITC also or your local authority.

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

Well done for being aware of your National Schools progress in The Green Flags. The recycling robot sounds like an exciting project for children to be involved in and a great way to raise awareness. What would be of great benefit for you in this category is to record progress in resource management over the years e.g. for Seán Uí Dhuinn's audit give the actual figures for the reductions achieved. This is not only to see the amount of resource saved but also to track your valuable progress in this category for you and your adjudicator. These figures/facts can then be used to encourage others to make changes. You could break down your actions into four categories of water, waste, energy and transport. Some of these will be more difficult than others for you to find projects in, but the key objectives in this category are to raise awareness of the issues and see changes in behaviour. As also mentioned by last year's adjudicator, see <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/> for many inspirational ideas. You are going in the right direction in raising awareness of the issues with the workshop on food waste, "Minimise Your Waste" leaflet and school initiatives, but are there any changes in behaviour? Establish a baseline with your proposed survey and monitor progress over the coming years and inform your future adjudicators.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your frustration in getting a mark of 65 in this category is understandable when only looked at as a percentage. Your adjudicator does not only look at it in these terms but also in comparison to other centers and what they are scoring. Rest assured you are scoring very high nationally in this category and rightly so as there is obviously great effort put into it (similarly in the sustainable waste category).

Please take the following in the spirit of constructive criticism, but you have many different styles and individual signs in the village. In the Wicklow Way Park, there were five different signs and four different styles i.e. Slí na Slainte, Leinster Heritage Drive, The Wicklow Way, Mágh dhá Chon and the Clonegal Route Finder sign. The Slí na Slainte sign was not noticed initially, tucked away in the corner. Both the Slí na Slainte and the Leinster Heritage

Drive would be difficult for people with disabilities to access. Is there a need for the Clonegal Route Finder sign approximately 10m away from The Wicklow Way sign? You could look at having all these signs located around the central paved area, making them easier to access by all. They also all could be presented in a unified style and greatly improve on the current disjointed presentation. Try to decide on a single style of presentation. The following publication is a great source of inspiration and good advice,
http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/content/files/bored_of_boards_1mb.pdf

Some dirty road signs were also spotted on the Tullow road (Welcome to Clonegal) and the Kildavin sign at the village green needed cleaning. Your 3 year plan mentions targeting dog fouling, this link may be useful
<http://www.carlow.ie/all-council-services/environment/green-dog-walkers> . Overall your village looked wonderful on adjudication day and congratulations to the retired people who integrate litter picking and exercising, and to the school children who help. You are at the level in the competition where marks are hard to come by in this category. Keep up the wonderful work.

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

Well done with your estate name stones which are consistent in their presentation, material used and feel appropriate for your locality. The new stone kerbing at Moyacomb Meadows was a good choice, admired and blended well with the name stone. The shrubs in Watch House Village don't necessarily need to be pruned every year. Valleyview might be a possible location to allow a 2-5m wide strip of long grass and wildflowers to grow along the top of the bank along the road. Great to see Slow Zones in estates. The Rowan planted at Radharc na Doirí seem to be suffering from damage from strimmers at ground level. Maybe consider hand pulling weeds at base or use mulch/weed suppressing membrane to give the trees a much needed break from the competition from grass.

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

Well done on taking the suggestions from last year's adjudicator and acting on them. Your treatment of the vegetative road edges is to be commended and the less is more approach is to be welcomed.

Concluding Remarks:

I really enjoyed my visit to Clonegal and hope to return soon to spend more time in your beautiful village.