

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal** Ref: **37**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **334**
Category: **B** Date(s): **28/06/2018**
30/07/2018

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	50	41	42
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	47	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	37	37
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	66
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	36	36
TOTAL MARK	450	328	334

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Clonegal Chluain na nGall chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. In this year Bliain na Gaeilge it was great to see the efforts you made to include Irish in your submission – go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir. Your application was a joy to work with for this adjudicator with all sections clearly laid out and the colour coded map and key were so helpful. Even having the application spirally bound made things easier as us adjudicators are always on the move, hopping in and out of the car and out walking in all weathers so a well thought out application such as yours is most helpful and very importantly ensures nothing is missed! It is clear that you have community wide help and support. Well done on all your communication work and a very informative website. Your 3 year plan is also very clear and easy to work with. At this point it must be highlighted that Clonegal is one of the top scorers in Ireland in the Tidy Towns competition and the scoring system is not figured out on a percentage system basis as you seem to think in highlighting a score that you think equates to 42% for Sustainable Waste and Resource Management. Marks are awarded on the basis of maintenance work and the development of new projects in the different categories but they also reflect the length of time a category has been in existence i.e. Sustainable Waste is a much newer category than Tidiness and Litter Control. Your score of 21 last year is very high when you compare to other places in Co. Carlow, so don't be so hard on yourselves!

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

The streetscapes of Clonegal are beautiful. You are blessed with many fine mature trees and beautiful 'mature' buildings to match! We are looking forward to your new Tree Survey, hopefully ready for next year's competition. The newly painted green fence and benches down at the Derry river bank looked great - the green tones in well with all nature's green shades in this part of the village. You've done a lot of work in this area – the repaving looked very well. The old Moyacomb school building is beautiful and very unusual. It is sad-looking at the moment but it is good to hear you are working with the owner towards a better future for this little gem. Have you contacted the Heritage Council? Such a building is sure to qualify for a heritage grant? Keep working on this one – it will be worth the effort in years to come. The Clonegal streetscape looked very well with many homes and businesses looking exceptionally well kept. Congratulate all concerned and keep up your good work.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Lovely planting along the path outside your old Community Garden on the Main St. The grass path mown around the pitch at Ben Mulhall Park is a lovely feature. The wildflower meadow section is a great initiative but needs a little help and this is explained in Nature and Biodiversity section below. Picnic tables were noticed pushed up against a fence and out of use near the Club house – are there future plans for these? With the trees and wildflower meadow,

this is a nice space to spend time in so more use could be made of these picnic benches perhaps? Lots of great pollinator friendly planting was noted around St Fiacac's Church. It's unusual to have flowering plants up close to a church building but they set the building off beautifully on the hot and sunny adjudication day. We loved the sheep sculpture on the Village Green – does she need a little explanation – does Clonegal have particular associations with sheep farming? We presume it does with the nearby Weaver's Cottages but maybe this can be explained/highlighted to the interested visitor. The planting around the sheep looked well and the single-flowered dahlias (well done, much better for pollinators) and roses were putting on a lovely show. The Weaver's Cottage garden sounded very interesting in your submission but it was unfortunately closed when this adjudicator called on a Thursday afternoon. The planting outside the Weaver's Cottages and in the Wicklow Way Park across the road all looked great. Your planting all around the village must be commended with lots of diversity and interest. You may already be aware but the National Biodiversity Data Centre has produced a very helpful list of pollinator-friendly plants and shrubs for every situation that you may find helpful into the future. It is entitled 'Pollinator Friendly Planting Code' and is available free to download at www.biodiversityireland.ie – you'll get more ideas for planting around other parts of Clonegal in the Guide.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

You show a great awareness of the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan in your submission which is so important. Not only will more planting of flowering perennials and shrubs help our beleaguered pollinators but also our communities not just through pollination but also through less annual planting work and less cost in the long run! Your wildflower meadow up at Ben Mulhall Park is a wonderful initiative, however, it appears to need a little bit of help as the grasses appear to be dominating and not letting the wildflowers make a good show. A great way around this is to plant the seeds of a native plant called Yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). You mention this in your great 'Helping the Pollinators' leaflet. The Yellow rattle ought to weaken the dominant grasses in your meadow just enough to let the other wildflower species come in and put on a better show. You will have plenty of natural wildflower seed sources in Clonegal without having to buy any other seeds once you've sown the Yellow rattle seeds. Also a little interpretation here so people know what you are trying to achieve is always helpful. The All Ireland Pollinator Plan has a template that you can print out or maybe your local biodiversity-aware young people might be able to come up with a few informative signs? Twice in your 3 year plan you refer to establishing butterfly beds on the 'rives' – is this the name of a location we missed or is it a typing error for 'river'? If it is the latter it wouldn't be the best idea as the Derry river is part of the Slaney River Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC 000781) and any work along the river banks must first be notified to the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). However, there are plenty of other locations around the village that would be suitable for Butterfly beds which is a great concept in itself. Also the fact that you have a river of European wide conservation significance flowing through your village is not something you refer to in your submission but it is something to be proud of and to celebrate.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

Great new housing of the recycling centre, a very imaginative use of all those cans. The Robot was just settling in on adjudication day and the mural wasn't fully completed but it will make for an eye-catching feature at this entrance to the village. Both projects are giving a powerful visual message about recycling. Well done on your work raising awareness in your community about various issues. This includes the sharing of the energy audit of Séan O' Dúinn's pub which makes thought-provoking reading.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The village looked spic and span on adjudication day. This adjudicator has enjoyed several visits to Clonegal down through the years and at different seasons and knows that your hard work on keeping it tidy is carried out throughout the year. It is immediately obvious to the visitor how much this village is cared for by its community. The only litter seen was in to the side of the recycling centre – littering at these centres is a blight for many towns and villages and is such a shame but in Clonegal's case your clever new housing of the recycling containers means that this litter wasn't visible to the passer-by which is another benefit of this project.

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

Clearly a good effort has been made in rebuilding the knocked Watch House cottage and it will look lovely when completed. It's wonderful to see the beautiful mature Oak tree at the entrance to this new house has been retained – it makes such a visual impact and mature deciduous trees are a beautiful and very noticeable feature of Clonegal and its surrounds – a big factor in lifting your village out from the ordinary and setting it apart. We look forward to the completed restoration and future use of the Bridge House, hopefully helping to open Clonegal up for more visitors. Only one window had gone in by adjudication day but it looked like a lovely wooden sash so hopefully the rest will follow as appropriate windows in period houses make such an impact – and especially in this house which is in such a prominent position in the village. Well done to Radharc na Doirí residents hand shearing around the base of the Rowans. Strimming damage to trees is very commonplace and a needless waste of good trees not to mention time and money. In your submission you remarked on a sloping bed at Watch House village that residents were finding hard to manage and were planning on planting heathers. On adjudication day the bank on the left looked beautiful covered in striking yellow wildflowers. Is it possible to manage both these slopes in this manner. A wildflower meadow only requires two mowings annually and the less disturbance to the covering vegetation of a slope the better in order to avoid slippage or erosion.

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

All approach roads to Clonegal looked well on adjudication day with an attractive rural character suited to their

surroundings. Nice planting was noted along some approach roads, the Kildavin road had a nice rockery along the path. This is a lovely idea where you have a very wide path and a flowery bed/rockery won't impede passage for pedestrians, buggies or wheelchairs. A length of perennial planting featuring pendulous sedges along the road opposite St Fiac's makes a nice feature of the drain and the native wildflowers growing along the path into the village make a lovely feature and are very appropriate in Clonegal's bucolic rural setting.

Concluding Remarks:

Clonegal is one of Ireland's most beautiful villages whose character and attractiveness is being continuously enhanced by a hard working community that clearly love and enjoy their surroundings and don't take it for granted. You are high up the Tidy Towns Table now so keep up your great work and maintain your very high standards and we look forward to our next visit.

Second Round Adjudication:

Firstly, your adjudicator would like to thank all those in the Clonegal Parish who assisted in any way with the preparation of your excellent entry submission. It was concise and the laminated map with accompanying key provided was easy to follow and made adjudicating your village a joy. Your updated Mission Statement which promotes respect, cultural diversity, neighbourliness, care for the environment and care for the whole community epitomises all that is fabulous about Clonegal Tidy Village Association. We are delighted to report that the level of community involvement and pride of place was very apparent from first arriving in your village. Your committee of eleven relish support from a number of core volunteers, and the wider community also get involved in community clean-ups and the Spring Clean. Furthermore, a large number of agencies, bodies, businesses and other local voluntary groups all buy-into the Tidy Towns ethos and support your work.

The national school, St Fiac's Church of Ireland and St. Bridget's Church all looked excellent. There are a number of buildings of architectural heritage that are very well maintained including the Glebe House, the Weavers Cottages, Wesleyan Chapel and of course, Huntington Castle. Your website tells of the developments in the built environment through the centuries and is very informative. Trees enhance the streetscape greatly and are impressive in a number of locations especially at the Church of Ireland and near the humpback bridge. Climbers enhance the graveyard wall. The schools involvement in the Junior Tidy Towns committee is evident and we were able to see their rockery and various environmental educational signage. We were blown away by your Bring Bank, fabulous mural and accompanying Robot adjacent. Congratulations to Liam Birmingham, creator of the robot and all those in Carlow IT who facilitated this project. You have done this to raise awareness of the facility and we are glad to note from the data you have provided that the Bring Bank facility is being used more year-on-year. Continue to promote recycling by promotion of the likes of the Recycling List Ireland, which is a national standardised list of items that are accepted as part of the recycling service throughout Ireland. Continue also with the themes of water conservation, energy, sustainable travel etc. Your adjudicator would be particularly interested to read of the results from your Survey Monkey questionnaire. We hope your survey will help inform future projects and allow you to come up with other engaging ideas to keep the momentum up under this competition category. Given your high standing in the competition perhaps you could consider getting involved in the national dialogue on climate action from a community point of view. Aim to make the residents of Clonegal sustainability change makers.

Businesses premises are also playing their part and there is very little to fault. Indeed praise is due to many for the effort gone into the presentation of buildings and facades. It was nice to see awards on display in the windows of the PJ Dunne. Trees currently conceal Bridge House but it is positive that the property appears to be undergoing renovations, its location is enviable. There are a number of other properties also under-going improvement works within the village. Generally, residential estates and houses were looking very well and along the main thoroughfare many residents had wonderful displays of colour and interest in their gardens and around front doors. Presentation in Moyacomb Meadow was excellent. In Watch House Village kerbside weeds need some attention.

There are a number of wonderfully maintained green areas and landscaped beds at every turn in the village. Particularly noteworthy is the area at the junction at the school. While we were adjudicating two foreign visitors, assumed to be walking the Wicklow Way due to their attire, were equally impressed and stopped to take a number of photographs. The All-Ireland Pollinator Plan is being implemented now throughout the village and you have encouraged householders to also get involved.

You have no fewer than eight approach roads, which makes up a significant area and we recognise it takes a lot of work and resources to maintain these. On the approach from Kildavan we spotted some roadside litter along an area that appeared to be recently cut and the road scraped. Rural road verges are a vital refuge for wild flowers driven out of our farmland therefore the wildflowers across from St. Bridget's Terrace are not only a feast for the eyes but also support our birds, bees and other wildlife. Continue to work to manage road verges while remaining safe for motorists. Fencing could be repaired near the pedestrian entrance to the Ben Mulhall Memorial Park. The footpath from the Church of Ireland into the village is a little moss covered in places and perhaps would benefit from a firm brushing and power hosing and 'children crossing' signage would benefit from washing on High Street. While some comments could be described as pernickety, this level of the competition requires attention to small detail to achieve the top accolades.

The efforts of your committee and the local community are clearly visible to the visitor. We thoroughly enjoyed visiting Clonegal and wish you well with your future endeavours and fully endorse the markings of your first round adjudicator.