

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newcastle**

Ref: **1037**

County: **Wicklow**

Mark: **268**

Category: **B**

Date(s): **20/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	30	30
The Built Environment	50	30	31
Landscaping	50	34	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29	29
Litter Control	50	36	38
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	10	10
Tidiness	30	17	18
Residential Areas	40	33	34
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35	36
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	261	268

Overall Development Approach:

We are pleased to receive your application for the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition 2013. We have noted that your committee of twelve people hold monthly meetings and from Easter onwards you have work parties on Monday evenings. You receive support from the local authority, An Taisce, Birdwatch, the local GAA and other voluntary organisations and local businesses. Your system of linking with the community includes newsletter, newspapers newsletters, website, email, billboard etc. Regular contact with the principal and teacher involved in the Green Flag effort works well. Many thanks for attaching the map of the area but it was of little use because it is too small to read. Thank you for your 3 year plan and hope you find it a useful guide. We note your views that participation in the competition gives residents greater pride in their area, allows them to make a contribution.

The Built Environment:

The village pump, the roses and the seat all look well. The houses opposite the village pump look well. The Sorbus trees here are very good specimens and we admired the sturdy seats. At the Castle Inn area there were plants in containers, the oil tank was neatly hidden and we admired the stone bridge. Newcastle GAA was well painted and the weeds were controlled. The Top Service Station looked fine as were the building and surrounds of the Holy Spirit Oratory. Watchtower House and the Community Centre both looked well. We admired the well-built wall partly faced in stone walls from the village to the Anglican Church and a majestic oak tree opposite the church. Is it intended to add another layer of stone facing when finances permit? The castle ruins are an interesting view from here. St. Francis NS is well painted and the grounds are in good condition. We noted the planning application for road improvements in this area. From your application we noted your action in the upkeep of unoccupied cottages in the village and liaison with new owner of old school house to improve its appearance. We hope that your application for leader funds for park, stone work around signs and signage between the village and east coast bird sanctuary is successful.

Landscaping:

The mature cedar tree makes great impact in your village and we noted the well maintained shrubberies. In the village centre the grassed margin with some trees and seats flanking the village pump looks very well. The success of ivy growing against the wall is an indication of how more ivy planting along here would in time provide a green wall. To prevent the ivy getting overgrown we suggest that it be pruned (in winter) in a similar manner to

a hedge. We note that you are aware of the need to cut hedges early in the year. There is scope for additional trees in streets in association with new footpath construction and in the private gardens at the cottages. Please remember to use just one tree species when planting a line of trees in a street. The planting in front of Peugeot was well maintained. We were very impressed with the magnificent specimen of an oak tree near the Anglican Church and also an Ash tree at the entrance to St. Francis's School. The range of styles of stone walls is an important feature of Newcastle and it is important not to plant anything in front that would hide them. A guideline for plant containers is to use them only where planting directly into the ground is not possible so be careful not to provide too many plant containers. It is better to have fewer well planted containers than a large number in which the quality of plants is inferior. If considering more seasonal flowers the use of permanent planting including herbaceous perennials for floral displays is encouraged rather than relying on annuals which are more time consuming.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Appreciating your local wildlife resources is vital in order to achieve under this category. In this regard researching and raising awareness is more important than 'doing' at the early stages. Biodiversity is under threat globally and sadly Ireland is a part of this trend. Learn why this is important and discover if there are areas designated for conservation close to you at www.npws.ie or www.noticenature.ie. Habitats of value include specimen trees, hedgerows, treelines, streams, woodlands and wetlands. These habitats are present in your community and they should be mapped. Learn how their quality can be enhanced through careful management. Try to list the plants and animals to be found there and recognise their significance (native, protected, or alien invasive?). This information can be fun to gather and can involve the schools or other interested parties. Raise awareness through holding events such as hedgerow walks or bat walks. Contact the Irish Wildlife Trust for more information.

We note the erection of bird boxes in the area beside the oratory and wildflower seeds planted to right of Oaklawn and that you have links with Birdwatch Ireland for new walks.

Litter Control:

Your action of litter collection on Monday evenings, other clean-up days, liaison with school to promote awareness and the use of newsletters is no doubt helping a great deal as we observed very little litter in your community.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

This category is about tackling the growing waste mountain that is creating problems of pollution, unwanted land use, and the use of dwindling resources. It is a global and a local problem. To save the Earth we need to move quickly to a zero waste society. Your town can play its part by first looking at the volume of waste that is generated. Contact your waste contractors who can help with this. Try to find out what is being thrown away and armed with this information you can start to think about how waste can be reduced. Examine the waste pyramid and note the recycling is only the fourth most preferred option after avoidance, reducing and re-using. One third of our waste is organic in nature. As in other communities we noted prunings dumped behind the cemetery wall at the Anglican Church and suggest that some action on composting would be appropriate. Other waste minimisation projects might include, reminding people to re-use shopping bags, encouraging the re-use of water bottles and coffee mugs at school and at work. The Bring banks had some weeds but were otherwise clean.

Tidiness:

You have a lovely village with very little untidiness. We note your actions under this section including the removal of graffiti from signs; some was seen on the finger post sign for Rathnew. We noted that the entrance to Blackditch was cleaned. Just beyond the junction sign on the Kilcoole Road there was an untidy entrance on the right. There were grass and weeds on top of a wall near the village pump. A sign within the GAA grounds needs cleaning. The old petrol pumps in the village are symbols of past years but look untidy.

Residential Areas:

In the Sea Road area Hunter's Leap was a lovely estate with a nice selection of ornamental trees. It is important to remove stakes from established trees to prevent damage to the stems. This is needed in some locations here. Castle Manor estate has a nice open space but there are weeds on the entrance piers and some dead trees take from the impact. The walls need painting. Well done on the recent removal of weeds from the kerbs. We admired the trees in Seacourt estate. Some gardens are not being maintained and there were weeds at some kerbs. The playground here is an attractive feature. Racefield estate is a nice estate with a wild meadow opposite. The houses looked fine and there were no weeds at the kerbs. A dead tree and surplus stakes should be removed

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

In general the condition of the roads and footpaths in the village is very good. We suggest that provision of more footpaths in the centre of the village would add safety and assist in traffic calming. From Kilcoole the village sign was clean. We suggest you allow natural vegetation to establish further here instead of planting ornamental shrubs which seem not to thrive anyway. The junction sign was faded and the pole needed painting. We liked the Slan Abhaile on the back of the welcome sign. We noted your actions for this section which included cutting back planting that was obscuring road signs and removing furze bushes that were blocking a right of way.

General Impression:

Well done on your continued improvements. We hope that our report will provide guidance for additional works and look forward to your entry again in 2014.