

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newcastle** Ref: **1037**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **272**
Category: **B** Date(s): **27/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	33
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	33
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	36
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	10
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37
TOTAL MARK	450	272

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you kindly for the extremely well prepared entry form complete with laminated map and indicators of relevant parts of what is a very pleasant village that has attained a good standing in the competition thus far.

The 3 year plan is practical in its approach and hopefully that it will achieve its objectives over the period in question.

The committee of 12 people is very much a proactive committee judging by the level of activity and work that you are engaged in.

It is good to note that you have good support from the newer residents of the village as well as the locals.

It is important to develop links with the local authority, agencies such as Leader, Wicklow Uplands Council and other bodies that work with you in your capacity as a voluntary body.

Most importantly it looks as if you certainly have the good will of the local community organisations and residents as these are the people that you can call on first hand to help you with various tasks.

Communication is done by tried and trusted older methods complemented by the newer forms of social media that give instant access to notices and information –some times a good thing sometimes not so good.

As your submission is very comprehensive and contains a lot of individual detail the adjudicator wishes to point out that this report covering eight categories has to be completed within a 3 page structure and within the guidelines of the competition.

That aside be assured that adjudication will be fair and impartial and will reflect the work undertaken over the last year.

You state that Tidy Towns has given many people the opportunity to get to know their neighbours and that in itself is on major plus for any community.

An increase in marks is merited.

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

The first thing one notices as you drive into the village proper is its orderly appearance with premises well presented boundary walls in a good state of repair and the road surface even.

The overhead wire system is not too obtrusive and they don't hang down as to cause problems for passing high end trucks.

Outside of the important liaison work that you the committee have been involved in with various property owners and school management a good deal of remedial work has taken during the last year and this has been noted by the adjudicator.

When you state that successful liaison with the owner of land in relation to a walkway between the village and Church Lane.

Has this now resulted in a new walk between the village and Church Lane allowing people access that heretofore

had been out of bounds? It was difficult for the adjudicator to ascertain whether this was the case or not. The following are a number of observations that the adjudicator noted during his walkabout. The Top Garage and Shop, Poppies and the Newcastle Mazda Dealer premises are all situated in the same location on the Rathnew end of village had their respective premises in good condition and the immediate front areas tidy and orderly. The Castle Inn is a fine premises very accessible and some comfortable outside seating for customers who want to avail of sunshine or the tranquillity of the surrounding countryside. The Holy Spirit Oratory was nicely presented and the parking area was accessible and well surfaced. The Oratory looked as if it had been re roofed in recent enough times. Newcastle Community Centre could do with a little brightening and maybe there are plans afoot to do this. I would suggest that the front walls be painted and the pole that holds both the light old sign be given a coat of creosote and the sign replaced with a newer one. Childrens Playground by nature can be prone to littering and this will be dealt with under another category. Whilst the equipment in the playground was in very good condition that whole area looked bare and uninviting. Signage for the most part was good but the yellow school warning sign near the play ground was in need of a good cleaning. Watchtower House is an impressive building well secured and offering a nice addition to the entrance in from Rathnew. The local GAA grounds on the way down to the Aerodrome was compact but parking was at a premium as it is on a bend on a very narrow road. Overall the standard was good and some properties have been improved upon since last year.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The village and its environs had many nice examples of mixed landscaping arrangements and the balance achieved was very good. Good to see the standard annuals such as petunias, alyssum, begonias in planters and ground beds used to good effect in combination with perennials and shrubs to give year round effect. To maintain this standard of presentation requires a lot effort on the part of the volunteers entrusted with this work and all who contributed are to be commended. This adjudicator was impressed with the extent of floral combinations that prevailed in private planting arrangements in private gardens especially in some of the residences on Sea Road and the housing areas in the core of the village. Trees are the most important plants in any urban landscape, yet relatively few towns and villages have enough of them having read the input in your entry form and the relevant section in the 3 year plan its clear the you very much appreciate the necessity to supplement the existing tree population with new stock. Suggested options in last year's report have been acted upon and the new saplings planted since last year were observed during the walkabout. The following arrangements appealed to this adjudicator; new planter boxed containing the tried and trusted annuals and sponsored by the local Mazda dealer, shrub beds at the garage, Watchtower House and Hunters Leap on Sea Road and nice little cottage garden on the Rathnew exit opposite the Community Hall.

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

This is an adjudication category that seemed to cause difficulties for many Tidy Towns entrants. Many have an average mark in this category but it has been noticeable during the last two years adjudicating that there has been a greater understanding of what is needed. Awareness and knowledge of local species and habitats and knowledge of local designated areas is the key so it is important for any group to be able to access information often available from local sources. One doesn't need to have a high powered degree to be a wildlife specialist. The local School would also be a key participant in any project that you engage in as school children need to be educated and informed about the relevance and importance of wildlife habitats in their local area. Why? It's part of their general education and also in latter life many of them will have knowledge to be passed on to the generations down the line. You have listed many projects both in your entry and the 3 year plan that involve interaction with academic institutions and other agencies but the adjudicator has not seen a reference to any involvement of local school children and that includes second level students who may be attending secondary schools say in nearby Rathnew or Greystones. An increase of one mark on the premise that you show evidence of "active involvement" by school children in next year's entry.

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

This is a category that has been revamped and marks increased to reflect the importance and need of putting more emphasis on waste prevention rather than waste management. The booklet on sustainable waste & resource management that accompanied your entry form contained excellent information that can be accessed easily. Also it has a list of relevant web addresses that can also be accessed for idea generation. www.localprevention.ie/tidytowns has now put a dedicated tidy towns page on its website and it highlights waste prevention project that other centres are involved in. It is certainly worth consulting as it can help to come up with new ideas that would suit one's own needs.

The bring one take one for book recycling, while certainly not a new idea it was called "swapping books" years ago, is something that is coming back in vogue and it is good to see communities at least thinking waste prevention. Good to note that you like many other communities are now availing of the services of the county environmental officer by organising talks for local people on policy and best practice.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Whilst one appreciates all the good work that you as a committee is doing to combat litter and to improve general tidiness and also that you have a beach area to cover the adjudicator was slightly disappointed with the basic standard in this category.

There were pockets of litter particularly at the playground area and the adjoining housing estate, at the verges of the main road out to Watchtower House and on the footpaths at a few different points in the village and in the Car park of the Community Hall and at the entrance to Clai Dub which looks as if it is up for sale.

Litter is a problem everywhere but even small pockets can be very obvious in a small village like Newcastle.

The adjudicator has to praise the condition of the recycling centre which was very compact and tidy.

The path at the side of the fenced off play area was very weedy, one or two signs need cleaning, weedgrowth also observed at base of community hall wall and the pole and sign have already been mentioned in a previous section.

The bank of the river opposite the GAA Club was cut but untidy looking and it needed something like a bed of nasturtiums to camouflage it.

Lots of good work being done in the category but unfortunately on the evening in question the adjudicator felt the basics could have been better.

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

The work that you are doing in encouraging residents to keep homesteads in good condition is certainly paying off as the residents of all the housing developments were making a conscious effort to present their areas in the best fashion possible.

The housing development, the name eludes me, near the playground has a few properties with side areas that need to be tidied up but overall it was in a very acceptable.

Hunters Leap on Sea Road was in excellent condition and the green areas were being mowed on the evening in question.

Racefield is a very nice and modern estate where properties were presented to a good standard, similarly with Sea Court and Sea Mount across the road.

Oaklawn View is a long established cluster of cottage type residences and these were in good condition but the road surface was a little rough.

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

Last year the adjudicator suggested that the Village needed additional footpaths in the core area of the village which I would agree with.

But the cynic in me would say Good Luck with that request given the cutback in resources in public services.

The entries into the village particularly from the neighbouring Kilcoole were very acceptable and inviting.

Suffice to say that basic maintenance guidelines for verge and hedgerow maintenance are being adhered to.

The montbreesia at the wall Leabeag Corner was noted.

The road down to the Aerodome, Beach and GAA Club is a little tight for the traffic and difficult to gauge if not a local.

Overall a very acceptable standard.