

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **314**
Category: **C** Date(s): **18/06/2014**
31/07/2014

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40
TOTAL MARK	450	314

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Leighlinbridge Tidy Towns Committee is welcome to the SuperValu Tidy Towns competition for 2014. We hope that your village will benefit from the visit of the adjudicator and from the observations made. Thank you for your creatively presented submission, your map that assisted me about town and led me to your present projects, the photos and all of the supplementary material. It is as well to get the negatives off my chest from the outset. Much of that supplementary material was of a touristy nature leading the reader to the highlights and 'must sees' of the town. Even your welcome tour guide, which was so well written, also tends to lead the witness and may even attempt to colour the attitude of the reader. This adjudicator likes to nose about and discover the true character and nature, as understood by me, of a centre. I feel better already. It is churlish to disagree with anything you do to benefit Leighlinbridge. You are perfectly correct to believe and write that all areas of the town have benefitted from the work of Tidy Towns committees for over fifty years. In fact you are acknowledging the Trojan work of many generations of committees. You are the inheritors of relationships that have taken years to develop. It is your turn to ensure that engagement with the school, the Carlow County Council, the businesses of the town is beneficial to Leighlinbridge and serves the ongoing needs of the town. Of all of the comments made in the Community Involvement section of the submission the one regarding informing the new residents to the town was what most impressed this adjudicator. This is social inclusion at work. The fact that you have had a positive response from this interaction is great, the welcome is the key. Leighlinbridge is a wonderful experience. While winning prizes is not the paramount priority in being involved in this competition, when one arrives at your standard thoughts drift towards the ultimate prize. So comments made by the adjudicator are meant to accentuate the positives and point up where he sees room for improvement.

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

There is no adequate translation in English for the Gaeilge word 'ársáíocht'. You describe your town as a Heritage town and this it really is. And the bridge or the castle are not the most 'ársá' heritage items. They were preceded by the slow moving Barrow and grew as a result of its existence. Therefore it is wonderful that this town acknowledges its river in the way the Barrow Walk is maintained, in the decoration of the bridge, in the welcome of the boat people. Leighlinbridge has traditionally been a busy commercial centre as evidenced by the malt buildings. And it has been home to many from generations past as is seen from the old photo of the Black Castle, bridge and old street. The meetings of the various roads at the junction tell us that this town was rarely bypassed. And now it is the turn of this generation. What an addition the hotel must be to the town. The adjudicator loved the Church area and the school. It is inevitable that buildings will change their use or fall into disrepair. But you are keeping a watchful eye on such developments also. Other developments will be mentioned in their relevant sections. And your plans are ongoing. These plans are not just at planning stage but are in hand as I visit. While the adjudicator does not fully understand your plans for the Garden of Remembrance the concept is admirable and one is confident will come to fruition.

Most of the street shop signage suits that traditional appearance, with certainly one exception. Strong colours of business premises add to the character of the streetscape, green and gold, purple and white, strong red window shuttering but a small thing like a window sill might need a rub of paint.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The people at the Arboretum choose their business location well. Leighlinbridge is ablaze with texture and colour. One is certain that Vivaldi's Four Seasons was a natural choice as a name to represent the colours that adorn the town throughout the year. Great use is made of box hedge from time of arrival at the 'Fáilte'. Roses abound, varying in colour and purpose from one area to another. Deciduous forests ensure that the image changes from one month to another. Contrasting colours might clash but in the case of this adjudicator they compliment one another as the red and yellow at the Sculptured Garden. Events are celebrated with both hard and soft landscaping as at the Millenium Park. Add to all of this the contribution of the householders in estates and along the street with their window boxes and hanging baskets. The front of the hotel is delightfully softened by the planting. The adjudicator loved the planter at the junction, something that might not suit every taste but it celebrated the beautiful day royally. Well done on your work at the entry points along the N9. All of that work tempts the passerby to investigate what lies further in. Maybe the central town junction needs a little more landscaping consideration, worth considering in the context of its prominence in the town. Your Memorial Park sparked echoes of French villages in which the villagers remember those who fell in the First Great War. Your losses seem to have been greater than those suffered by many French villages. Your remembrance of those claimed by the Barrow illustrates an ambivalence in your respect and love for the river that hugged many cherished members of your community to itself. The landscaped areas of the town have many varied purposes.

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

The adjudicator disagrees a little that your 'main task is the protection of these amenities'. The amenities were provided by you for the recreation and enjoyment of the community and what wonderful amenities they are. The adjudicator feels that your main task is the protection of the habitats that gave rise to the amenities. Planting on the island is an example of how you enrich those habitats. Well done on the winter holly which I could not see but then that island is not my natural habitat. Well done on your interaction with the various bodies and people who can assist the sustainability of the wildlife in the area. The adjudicator loved the wildlife board after leaving the main road. While one knows that the Barrow Walk was not invented by you the condition of the walk is a credit to all involved. The restful seats make it accessible to most ages. The minimalist approach to mowing provides access to walkers but with the least amount of disruption to Gods little creatures. There is someone with a lovely lawn who disposes of the grass cutting over the fence. Could that person be persuaded to start home composting? Sorry. On the other hand the adjudicator was pleased with your attitude and practice on the steep slopes to give the wild flowers expression. The adjudicator is a little concerned with the content of your 3 Year Plan with regard to wildlife as it lacks the energy of other sections. Yes the Biodiversity survey is a most acceptable project but one feels that there are other areas into which you could sink your teeth. How many residents are beekeepers?

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

Forgive me, I tried to find your water harvesting and composting systems but failed. But the photos will suffice. And well done. There is a lot of grass to be composted. Do you divide your crates into different years? What else happens in the community garden? Are there allotments? This section has now taken on a new importance in the competition. 50 marks instead of 20. This jump reflects the priority that the TidyTowns competition is now giving to waste management and resource management. Your 3 Year Plan will have to reflect this major shift in the priorities of the competition. At present your 3 Year Plan is a disappointment in this area. It is generalised and nebulous and needs definable, achievable projects. The adjudicator feels that you must now tackle this section with the authority, the energy, the resources that you have applied to other sections. Start by analysing the contents of the revised guidelines from the TidyTowns unit on waste and resource management. This section is no longer about minimising waste. It is about eliminating waste. Have a chat with the Carlow Environmental Area Officer. Choose projects that are meaningful for the households and businesses of your town. Put your stamp on the projects you choose as you do with all of the other sections of this competition. With the workshops that you plan remember that most of your audience will be female, a reality. Do not frighten them off with lofty, pie in the sky suggestions. Let those women who come along do at least half of the talking. It is the experience of this adjudicator that it is the women of Ireland should be laying down the law when it comes to our co2 emissions. Last year's list of activities was much more definite, more exciting than this year's.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

What contributes to the tidiness of your town? The appearance of the grass margins, the condition of hedging, the condition of footpaths and kerbing, freshness of paint, landscaped maintenance, a flourishing varied texture of natural growth, your finger sign posting, presentation of signage and the presentation of public realm. How do you fare? Very well. What militates against a tidy appearance? Debris on the path and road surfaces, dereliction, weeds on kerbs, lack of definition along road sides, clutter whether it be footpath clutter or window clutter or advertising clutter, litter, jaded shop fronts, poor maintenance of the frontage of shops, cheap shop signage, poor maintenance of landscaped areas, faded road markings, graffiti. How do you fare? Very well and keep up the effort. Paint fades every year. And tell the County Council that road marking need renewal regularly too especially at speed bumps. Litter will always be dropped. One found it in most sacred places, generally teenage litter. The adjudicator loves your practice of the 'multi dimensional' approach. One element of that approach is to identify black spots and to visit them daily. Eyes on the big prize. You do well. The official Bring Centre is spotless. The unofficial Bring Centre, of your own design and maintenance is a joy to stumble on unexpectedly.

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

One envied the people on their balcony enjoying the sunshine and the river in what was once a malt house. Wonderful to see how a building can be transformed into a new, viable usage. The same can be said of many of the businesses along the street that are now residential homes with the passing of time. And how well they present themselves. There are the rows of cottages around the Laserian Terrace that represent a boom time economy in the development of Leighlinbridge and are now beautifully maintained and presented. These cottages spill out onto the mainstreet and add no end to the residential stock of the town. They are further enhanced by the location of your Millenium Garden. There are terraces of two storey houses around the street that contribute to the heritage sense of the town, again all brightly coloured and their gardens dancing to the musical sunshine. But one cannot overlook the modern estates and town houses. While you mention some estates that are not finished, do not despair, their day will come. For now you are interacting with the residents, you plan inter estate competition and the landscaping will develop in time. The sheltered housing to the rear of the Church is another wonderful development, seemingly safe and secure and offering stability to the residents. Single builds enhance the approach roads. The challenge for you is to ensure that residents maintain their pride in the appearance of their homes, front gardens and frontages. The opportunity is that new blood brings new life.

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

It is in this section that you really excel. You have miles of roadway to cover especially as you have set your bounds well from the 50 speed limits. You are correct in extending your area of maintenance beyond those signs as that gives ownership of the roads from the mainroad and affords you the opportunity of landscaping the entrances to Leighlinbridge. Probably the one exception is the road to the GAA pitch and that lovely enclave of houses. A maintained verge draws everyone into the town community, so well done. One is pleased that you mow a margin. At times the adjudicator was not sure if too much was being mowed, a metre width provides definition and a corridor for the little ones. Hedging is another aspect of the approach roads that endears. That cotoneaster hedge is divine and the adjudicator is certain that the bees love it. There was one native hedge up near the school and the adjudicator fears the cutting may have been recent. But in general you are aware of the seasonal nature of hedge cutting and abide by it. There is a gate here and there that should be looked after. The adjudicator spied weeds outside some residences. Residents add wonderfully to the appearance and the enjoyment of the approach roads. Your walking and cycling plan would be a great facility if it comes to fruition.

Second Round Adjudication:

The adjudicator was delighted to visit Leighlinbridge for its second round adjudication. The many approach roads were excellently presented. They included well-maintained grass verges with a wildlife corridor and splendid areas of perennial landscaping. The approach roads certainly gave a very positive first impression of the village. The village has as its focal point the superb feature of the mill. Any developments that have taken place have thankfully complemented this impressive building. Lord Bagnell Inn was admired for its presentation as were many businesses throughout the town. The river bridge and castle is another superb feature. The Church and school were also well presented. There were many areas of excellent landscaping. The bed of red geraniums at the Mill was splendid and the hanging baskets on the lanterns were admired. The Garden of Remembrance was visited and enjoyed. The pink roses really stood out and looked beautiful. The river walk which was getting good use on the day is splendid. Brannockstown hill is a superb feature overlooking the town and it is obvious to see the amount of work and effort that the community have put into this area. The use of stone in the picnic table and sculptors complements the stone of the Mill which it overlooks. Some trees in this area however need new stakes and ties as one tree being bound by blue rope looked unsightly. Lanterns throughout the town are an important part of the streetscape and for this reason they need to be in pristine condition unfortunately the adjudicator felt they needed cleaning and in some cases painting. The lantern at the Garden of Remembrance is one such in need of repair. Some weed growth was noted in areas of the village, not huge amounts but in a tidy village small things do distract. Also continue to be mindful of when hedge cutting is permitted. Well done on this year's presentation.