

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Leighlinbridge** Ref: **41**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **321**
Category: **C** Date(s): **09/07/2015**
09/08/2015

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	48	48
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	40	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	43
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	36	37
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	15	17
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	62	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	31	31
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
TOTAL MARK	450	314	321

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Many thanks for your entry in this year's Tidy Towns Competition. This was this adjudicator's first time assessing your highly regarded village and it didn't disappoint. Thank you for your submission of such an excellent, clear and helpful entry. This adjudicator echoes the praise of last year's adjudicator whose comments on the entry material you have clearly taken on board. Your entry was the model of clarity and the maps very clear and easy to use. Just keep an eye on where the Tasks are allocated. No 14, for example, should be in Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities. The involvement of the Parish Centre and the Independent Living facility was admired. You are making great efforts in attracting new volunteers and the event you described is a great example of this.

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

The upgrade of the walking surfaces in the beautiful Garden of Remembrance was admired, as were the repairs to the stone wall at Ballyknockan and on the Tullow Road. The works at the area adjacent the river on the Milford side are yet to be fully finished but the fact that this was done 'in-house' is very admirable.

Scoil Naisiúnta Laisrian looked really well on adjudication day. The Green Flag was flying and there was a bicycle rack in the well kept grounds. The bollards had been touched up and the gates were well-painted. The businesses of Leighlin are almost all of a very high standard. The adjudicator loves the old Pye and Bush signs on Doran's beautiful shop. Uí Braonáin's is really well kept and the interior bar and shop was enviously viewed. The three shop fronts used as display by LIG and the Tidy Towns efforts were visited. These will need to be refreshed soon. The old ENFO (alas no more) posters are now faded and this makes the premises look unloved. The petrol station near the main road was busy but tidy. The Gulf petrol station was scrupulously neat and is charming in its old-world style in a way that modern service stations will never be again. Across the road the Lord Bagenal looks really great despite its scale. It embraces its riverbank setting and enhances this quadrant of the village. The shopfront of the original pub is very attractive and sits perfectly with the rest of Main Street.

Kelly's and Meaney's are two very traditional pubfronts and really fit in well. Kilbride's was in need of some cleaning. There is a beer sign missing from its frame on the corner here. Rico's takeaway was bright and clean and Leighlin Pharmacy was in perfect order.

The RC Church and grounds are just beautiful. The car-park here was spotless. It is felt that the clothes bank adds nothing here and could just as well be moved to another location where it will be as useful.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The reworking of the frontage to Ballyknockan is underway and it is hoped will make a great positive difference. The terrific work in the Garden of Remembrance continues. This is a truly lovely place of which you should be justifiably proud. The adjudicator could have spent hours here by the river. The WWI monument hadn't been seen before and is truly remarkable, if sobering. There are many examples of fine work around the village which have evolved along with your Tidy Towns experience. The half-tub planters along the front wall of the garden are beautifully balanced. The mature landscape planting in front of the tennis courts need to have a little bindweed removed. The area here looked very well though. The green between the two roads here is a lawn of the very highest quality and the trees here are splendid. The long rectangular bed on the Tullow Road is beautiful.

It is recommended that you do not plant anything at the base of trees for fear of disrupting the delicate processes at the interface of root and soil. The rowans in front of the national school would look quite perfect as they are. The Vivaldi Garden is so well kept. It's a lovely and most unusual area. There is Napeta and Columbine for the bees and birdsong was loud on the morning of the summer visit.

The adjudicator was puzzled as to why three reservoir basket planters were placed on one lamppost when there are unadorned lampposts within view. This aside, great consistency was noted throughout the village in terms of colour and scale. The adjudicator is sure the bridge-side area will be conform to this too in time. The green at Seskin Road and adjacent the church was like a croquet lawn. The Millenium Garden is a beautiful project and there is gorgeous landscape planting here. Again, some bindweed is looming. The planters at the bridge are beautifully filled with rich colours.

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

Leighlinbridge has the good fortune to be located within or adjacent a Special Area of Conservation. The River Barrow is one of Ireland's inland waterway treasures and it's great to read good evidence that you appreciate this. Perhaps you could discuss with the Conservation Ranger if there were any priorities he'd place on actions your group might carry out to help this designated site maintain its good conservation status. The Barrow Way is a gorgeous walking route and once more, envious eyes were cast - this time up the splendid banks. The management regime here seems perfect. If in doubt consult with NPWS or Inland Fisheries Ireland and indeed Waterways Ireland on best practice here. The bridge looked splendid with red valerian, herb Robert, valerian, bramble and mosses all growing as they should, unchecked on the parapet walls.

The refurbished wildlife noticeboard was noted. The adjudicator did note some condensation already on the southern side. Perhaps recheck the seal and air this regularly. The wildlife survey information - species lists and descriptions is of great interest. The biodiversity workshop is precisely the kind of activity in which you should be involved. The adjudicator recommends that you have at least one public wildlife event in order to keep your residents engaged with biodiversity. Perhaps get some technical advice on how to gather and store biodiversity data and how to share this with the National Biodiversity Data Centre.

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

Many groups find this category difficult. Not so Leighlinbridge. To be informal about it, you have this one nailed. You list project after project that tick so many of the boxes. You have involved a diverse range of community members from across the age spectrum, you raise awareness (it is hoped that the Tidy Towns Unit's recent publication on this category has helped). You list up-cycling, organic gardening, WOW days and training. You deserve an increase on your already high points here.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your entry here is very concise, perhaps a little overly so. However, you do describe your anti-litter efforts and importantly give thanks to the DSP workers and Carlow Co. Co. for the part they play. Weed control is excellent almost all throughout. The bottle banks were fairly gleaming. Well done.

Some minor issues are in need of attention. The 'caution children' sign on the Tullow Road is in need of replacement. The 'stop' sign pole here is in need of repainting.

Litterbins were in good order - the one at the Lord Bagenal Inn was actually shining. The interpretation boards such as the Historic Town boards and those in the Remembrance Garden are of high quality and very well done. However, there is sufficient of these and any more will risk clutter. That said, the historic town signs appear to have room for an additional 'banner' above the main sign. A titular sign might be therefore be added if so desired.

Only the slightest amount of litter was seen. This was clearly car-borne. To balance this out, the adjudicator met two volunteer litter-pickers on an early patrol.

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

Again, a very concise entry here but the proof of the pudding was the adjudicator's hugely positive experience on the walkabout visit. It is clear that after such a long involvement in the competition, you are well-versed in communication with your residents, businesses and householders.

A house on the Tullow Road is being refurbished and the garden wall will need painting too. A beautiful back garden was noted nearby. Another garden's metal fencing has been damaged by a car and needs to be repaired.

The highlight for this adjudicator however were the front gardens on the Bagenalstown Road. One simply defies description, such was its display. Although Inis Gardens still looks unfinished, nice planting at its name stone was admired. There is no name sign on a little residential street off Laserian Street. The curtilage of one of the cottages here is in need of weeding. Work on derelict house opposite the junction boxes was noted. The housing estate (no name sign seen) adjacent the playground has some lovely planting.

Singular praise must go to the Leighlinbridge Housing Association development at St Laserians's. Here there is integration of living and community space. Congratulations to the architect and landscapers and to the people who keep it looking so good.

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

There are many approach roads to the river-crossing village of Leighlin. And yet all look well. This is no accident but the product of much work. This is ongoing as you worked well with Carlow Co. Co. in order to get a new footpath on the Old Leighlin road. Well done to the County Council as well as yourselves.

The approach from Carlow along the River Barrow is arguably your best with stone walls, well-cut verges and a neat though not recently cut beech hedgerow and cherry trees. The planters are symmetrical and the benches are contemporary. The stone wall and red valerian go naturally well together. There is no doubt where you're going when you sweep in along the river here. The name stone at the Tullow Road looks great but one of the 50kph speed limit signs is hidden by a sycamore. Perhaps paint the finger sign post across from here?

Down near the bridge, a lamppost by the shop/pub has a lamp askew. The stone wall repairs were noted. The playground is in need of attention. The 'flooring' is damaged here and one of the kids' attractions is broken entirely. The farm gates opposite Seskin Road could be greatly improved. Watch out for loose paving stones on the Main Street.

There has been great work of planting and green maintenance on the Bagenalstown Road. The footpath here has been meticulously kept, by the stone wall all the way to the speed limit. The grassed areas are scrupulously cut and the boundary planting make the adjacent bed give a really great splash in contrast to the greens of the Vivaldi Gardens.

Concluding Remarks:

This was a memorable and most enjoyable first adjudication of your splendid village. The sheer diligence and care that you lavish upon it was tangible. Leighlinbridge is quite rightly now among the very best in this competition.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure for this adjudicator to visit Leighlinbridge after a few years absence and we were impressed with the notable improvements that have taken place in the meantime. First of all, we would like to compliment you on your excellent Entry Form, which was clear and concise with recent work clearly laid out. Village boundaries are well defined. Each of your approach roads proudly invites visitors to Leighlinbridge, through use of attractive landscaping and name stones that enabled us to get our bearings. Use of Irish was noted as was the welcome absence of temporary signage on approaches. Verges and hedgerows were very neatly maintained – we would remind you that hedge cutting is not permitted from Mar 1 to Aug 31 inclusive under the Irish Wildlife Act 1976. You do show an awareness of encouraging your local wildlife and biodiversity in your submission. We were struck by the efforts in recent years to tidy up neglected corners – many now contain colourful pocket planting. The Millennium Garden is nicely maintained – just keep an eye on weedy surfaces. We acknowledge that this type of surface is challenging to maintain. The new footpath at the Memorial Garden makes this area more accessible and attractive. This riverside area was the highlight for us with its beautifully maintained green areas, picnic area, grass trails and historical signage. It was being well used when we visited - by families, fishermen and picnickers. We were also happy to note that Leighlinbridge was almost litter free apart from two small pieces. We commend your litter management and litter awareness programmes, which are obviously paying dividends – vast improvement from our previous visit some years ago. The Lord Bagnel Hotel was neat with effective landscaping. The bottle bank area was very neat – the tree branch should be trimmed as it is obscuring the signage behind. Mature tree planting in this area enhances this approach. The nearby Vivaldi Garden was in excellent order with its more formal planting scheme. The nearby terraced homes were neat with some colourful gardens. Visitor information signage was good throughout and there was certainly enough of it! The Kilkenny Road has some lovely natural features such as the wonderful stone walls and magnificent horse chestnut trees. A nearby derelict cottage was freshly painted – we might recommend that you paint in the window lines for a better visual effect. We were impressed by the quality planting at the entrance to Barrow Lough estate – a creeper along the timber fence might soften the future appearance - that said all was fresh and neat. The Health centre was nicely presented and landscaped. On the old Leighlin Road, all was neat at the playground, church, car park and graveyard. The 'Barrow Drive' sign is hidden in the trees and requires attention. The new footpath further out was noted. You might consider future planting of some native or beech hedging along the unattractive fence. In the village centre, the heritage lighting would benefit from cleaning and one in particular requires repair. The lettering on the lifesaving equipment should be refreshed (Barrow Way). We were impressed that you have segregated bins here and would be interested to know if they are being used properly by the public. Leighlinbridge has some attractive traditional shopfronts, including PJ Doran's and the side entrance of the Lord Bagnel Inn. They add to the character of the village. Finger posting was excellent throughout the village. We are impressed with your understanding of the 'Sustainable Waste & Resource Management' Category and congratulate you on the array of relevant projects happening in Leighlinbridge. You

might submit one or two photos of these next time. Well done Leighlinbridge on a wonderful presentation.