

# Tidy Towns Competition 2013

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**  
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **277**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **23/06/2013**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2012</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2013</b>
Overall Development Approach	50	43	44
The Built Environment	50	42	43
Landscaping	50	31	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	29
Litter Control	50	28	28
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	12	13
Tidiness	30	15	16
Residential Areas	40	30	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	34
General Impression	10	8	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>277</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

Your adjudicator would like to welcome back Monaghan to the 2013 National TidyTowns Competition. The breadth and level of your work and enthusiasm is tremendous. Your adjudicator was very impressed with the work of the high number of volunteers and particularly youth volunteers. You work well with the Heritage Officer, Biodiversity Officer and other strategic members of Monaghan County Council which is reaping rewards.

The dedication of the youth representatives is to be highly commended and Monaghan should be proud in that they are setting the levels high for local co-operation for the national TidyTowns competition. The 'second eye' network scheme for County Monaghan TidyTowns is another excellent initiative.

Thank you for your long-term strategic plan which is clear and comprehensive and involved consultation with volunteers and committee members.

Working with the community, being seen and giving away freebies such as car waste bins will also engage you with the community. Throughout your entry form you talk of the very positive responses you get from the community as a result of your work. Your adjudicator felt that there is a great, strong vibrant community across Monaghan.

### The Built Environment:

The Monaghan education campus was a very impressive modern building off the ring-road. No cycle lanes were noted on the route to this out of town facility but no doubt there will be public transport links all in place to here. Your entry form does state that a greenway project is being developed providing a cycle and biodiversity trail to the campus so this should be encouraged as soon as possible.

St Marccartan's Cathedral is the most wonderful structure and external landscaping and footpaths at the front of the building have further enhanced its setting.

You are already working on dressing vacant shop windows. Well done on these projects and raising awareness of changes over the years – such as in the singer shop project on Dublin Street adjacent. It was sad to see a number of empty premises in the Diamond area including McNallys. Perhaps this prominent window could have a display exhibited here whilst the premises are hopefully re-let?

There are many beautifully presented buildings and structures in Monaghan. The metal arch entrance sign for The Northern Standard R&S Printers was admired – great to see this still in situ.

The Courthouse did not have any external sign indicating the function of this building and had to ask a passer-by to confirm that it was indeed the Court House. Church Square was very nicely presented and Westerra Hotel was a delight – beautifully kept, and Boyle men's wear adjacent also looked very well. Your adjudicator was surprised by the number of operating commercial premises in Church Square that have totally blocked the transparent look of windows with opaque signage. The views from Church Square up Mill Street work great drawing the eye up to Aviemore House. Magill's wall-clock looked well and it is lovely to be able to still see through shutters and admire the merchandise.

The County Museum was beautifully presented with its strong blue doors and railings. The Market House Theatre was surrounded by nice cobble stones providing a feeling of separation and detachment which is needed as it is tightly surrounded by busy roads.

Wilson's brothers shop deserved a special mention with the beautiful wooden curved framed windows and tiled inscription on the door step.

The town council building was painted very good, appropriate colours, but the only sign on this Dublin Road premises was regarding Christmas cover (adjudication was in June).

S McKenna's public house looked very well on Dublin Road. The paint job and mural of the sliotar on An Poc Fada looked very well.

A small number of strategically located buildings could be enhanced such as the gable end of the building that formerly housed Dieselec. The old school on Dawson Street has most of its windows blacked up and boarded – except the top ones which have thus become target practice areas! The metal gates of the post office side entry should be repainted. Nearby the gates to the premises of John Keenane Solicitors were fantastic. Commercial premises along this road were nicely painted and presented well including Wilkie & Flanagan Solicitors and Barry Healy – though it was felt that the garden signs for the latter premises were not as appropriate here.

### **Landscaping:**

There is a lovely array of natural planting and landscaping that will provide structure and year-round landscaping for the Monaghan Community. 170 trees planted within three years is transforming the look and feel of Monaghan. The double line of tree planted on the New Road/Macartan Street already screens out this shopping centre very well and provides the many benefits of trees including shelter for wildlife in the centre of Monaghan. The beds planted by the traffic lights looked very natural with sunflowers beginning to grow and fennel and willow obelisks to trail flowers. These beds will look wonderful in the summer and will provide nectar and pollen for bees and other insects.

Landscaping at the Diamond and Old Cross Square was just excellent. The 'old cross' sundial could be easily admired. Likewise at Dawson Street/Market Street junction landscaping was very good. The hanging baskets at the end wall on Mill Street effectively drew your eyes up this street. Well done on the concerted efforts here. Rose beds on the hospital drive were well maintained. The flower beds at the Old Station house looked natural with its ox-eye daisies and rose of Sharon, drawing the eye away from the poor building across the road here. Your adjudicator didn't notice the false windows in the Station house until the second look! The number of hanging baskets at Ashleigh's B&B look very well and give this building a great lift.

Further out the Leisure Centre is very well presented and would attract the visitor. The family resource centre on Oriel Road was also very well presented and no litter was noticed at the bring banks here. This whole stretch of road was very nicely finished with trees and there is a great amenity in the local playground. Some graffiti was noted here – most inoffensive but some political graffiti was very inappropriate here.

The re-painted windows at two derelict homes on Old Market Cross were noted and raised a smile! This policy of working on strategic buildings in certain streets is to be admired. Fencing on 'Oriel Way' was repainted and looked better for this.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The extent of survey work and understanding of the wildlife and habitats is to be highly commended. Work includes:

Monaghan Town Habitat Survey  
Monaghan Town Draft Biodiversity Survey  
Town Tree Survey  
Bird Survey  
Management Plan for specific areas eg. Tom Young's Wood.  
Plan for Japanese Knotweed.

Thank you for including all of these as they were good to see and read. The sensory/sage garden was wonderful to see, feel and smell. The bright colours, layout and position so near the town centre are a delight. The

information boards about the habitat trail at Peter's Lake read well – giving precisely the right amount of information required. The ability to use QR codes is a great initiative. The work on delivering biodiversity workshops and erection of bird and bat boxes are more examples of great ways to involve the community raising awareness of the wildlife habitats and species in Monaghan.

Your adjudicator was disappointed to note the apparent use of weed killer along base of trees and edges of roads in Cortolvin view.

### **Litter Control:**

The litter poster competition is a great initiative. You also are involved with the gum litter task force. Whilst there is still a way to go with the latter, do keep up the sustained efforts. Chewing gum and cigarette butts appear to be the main culprits in your litter leagues. Behind the courthouse gates were a number of alcohol bottles in situ. Some litter was noted in the shrubbery of the long stay car park on the Clones Road. Further on at Park Road there was a lot of roadside litter.

The work of the LITTER VIGILANTES is to be commended and your focus of work on the canal area following the IBAL report. Sustained effort is needed here as there was still litter on adjudication day – is there a group responsibility for this area? Maybe some of the youth committees may be interested here?

The wall-mounted bin at Paddy Powers was overflowing – this should have been checked prior to closing time of the bookmakers.

### **Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:**

It was good to read that you had 'Recycling Champions' at the Taste of Monaghan Festival. Your adjudicator hopes that this resulted in correctly segregated waste at the festival. The ECO Summer camps are a wonderful initiative. They will help you gain marks in this category of the competition as well as help further the important messages of this aspect of the competition.

The business STEM project sounds very interesting and your adjudicator looks forward to learning more on this and the success of the food digester at Teach na Daoine. The White flag at Monaghan's Leisure Centre was noted. No doubt the sculptures at Naí Scoil san Lughaidh were the final products of a lot of time spent in reusing and minimising waste – wonderful colourful displays of numerous types.

### **Tidiness:**

Sorry to hear that the proposed mural for the Courthouse car park was rained off. The imminent works here will make a difference and it will be good to see the end of this hoarding. The mowing regime on the grounds of St Louis Secondary school looked well along the edge of the Ulster Canal Bank. The canal pathway here was inspected and looked quite well though there was a lot of litter in the area and signs here were damaged and the lifebuoy was missing.

The Church of Ireland is wonderfully presented. Its railings have a number of temporary signs attached here. This seems to be a regular occurrence as quite a few cable ties were left behind on the railings here. It was sad to see the Private Property sign here so prominently.

The sign celebrating 30 years of Mullaghmat and Cortovlin at the Community Centre lifted this building which could also do with some more attention, weeding and addressing of rust on front shutters. Hanging vinyl signs marking the entrance to the casino did not look well on Dublin Street. There was also a lot of chewing gum on the entrance to this alleyway.

The sewer vent pipe on the junction of The Mall and Ballybay Road needs some attention. Is that a Christmas wreath on the front of the Integrated Development Company's premises?

### **Residential Areas:**

The best-estate entrance competition and the junior tidy towns has made a big difference to this category in the competition. The streetscape of the Dublin Road is great to admire with an array of two, three and even four storey buildings. Killygoan was a very nice area with a park, playground and a great local amenity for the residents.

There were some lovely red-brick three storey homes on the N2 road towards the ring road with well-maintained boundary wrought-iron fencing. The iron gates opposite could do with a touch-up of paint. There was a private home below the Cathedral on the Dublin Road that required some attention. Homes in Limegrove looked well.

Homes in Gortakeeghan Park were well presented but the unfinished homes had plastic ripping off the cladding opposite Gortovlin Road. Whilst these are fenced off they are an eyesore and will continue to deteriorate – what is the status of these?

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

Your adjudicator couldn't figure out why so many vehicles were emerging from the court house buildings on a Sunday. Upon exploring the area and realising that this was an access to and from the shopping centre – your adjudicator felt that this was very clever and allowed a good flow of traffic from the shopping centre here. Arriving from Ballybay there are some wonderful mature trees and the side banks have been under planted with

rhododendron, presumably not ponticum which is very invasive.

The bog oak sculpture at the junction to Tydavnet Road was well positioned and looked good in-situ. Near here is an old, steep, north facing bank that had at some stage been landscaped - this would be a difficult job from the start and would not be recommended! Your biodiversity officer may have some advice for this area.

There have been some lovely recent improvements of streetscapes in Monaghan. The artistic height barrier by Peter's lake was admired. The new cobble stones and the use of darker cobbles to demarcate the disabled parking bay by the Westenra Hotel was admired also.

The alley to the town car park from Dublin Road was not very well managed – there was a lot of litter and graffiti in the wall mounted signs here. Japanese knotweed was also noted growing further down this back alley. One of the buildings in this alley has the most peculiar paint job – the ladders were obviously too short for the building. There is a derelict premises on the northeast side of this alleyway. At the back of the building there are broken windows and the rear yard is covered with buddleia – great for the butterflies.

Monaghan United FC's premises were nice and the use of raised kerbing and trees nicely separated these premises from the passing traffic.

### **General Impression:**

Green and lush is not what your adjudicator expected but what was enjoyed on the day – that and the wonderful sound of bells striking the hour in the Diamond area. Monaghan town is striving forward in the national TidyTowns competition and the town centre presented very well with nice balance of heritage buildings, private residences and commercial premises. Keep up the good work.