

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **309**
Category: **E** Date(s): **18/06/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	44	45
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	45	46
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	36	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	37	38
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	17	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	52
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33	34
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	302	309

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Thank you kindly for your very detailed entry form complete with support material which includes excellent maps, 3 year development plan and the youth award entry.

You are welcomed to the 2016 SUPERVALU Tidy Towns Competition.

It has been more than a few years since this adjudicator was in Monaghan Town and the transformation in the core area has been major and hugely positive for the town.

Congratulations to you the Committee for the on-going commitment to Tidy Towns and your endeavours to raise the standing of Monaghan Town in the competition year on year.

Your application is quite detailed and it would be neigh impossible to capture everything in a 3 page report that covers 8 sections.

The adjudicator's powers of English comprehension have waned over the years but rest assured that the adjudication was carried out in a fair and impartial manner.

Coordination of the efforts of all for the benefit of the town is a rather daunting and the main committee has handled this task with absolute professionalism.

On-going interaction with other town organisations and the schools has resulted in targeted action items being completed within the given timeframe.

The strength of the Junior Tidy Towns Section is reflected very much in the quality and practicality.

One can readily see that there has been strong links built with the local primary and post primary schools in the town.

Your input under "How do you engage with local schools" is quite detailed and has been noted by the adjudicator.

The support of the County Council through its new municipal structure and other agencies has to be recognized as these bodies are in a position to supply resources in terms of professional support and if! funding for dedicated projects came on stream.

Commercial Businesses in town have backed your efforts in various forms, this kind of practical support is invaluable and it's also a testament to the fact that they see what you are doing as beneficial to the future development of Monaghan Town.

Good to note also that you have engaged with the Men's Shed whose members have an array of skills that could be utilised for the benefit of tidy towns and ultimately the community as a whole not sure what you mean by "transition group" but another organisation that would fit under that umbrella heading would be Active Retirement.

Your embracement of the various forms of social media is very impressive and this has added to a very comprehensive communication process to get your various messages across to the public of Monaghan, one detects that your efforts haven't fallen on deaf ears.

That is not to say that there are not problems that need to be addressed and these will be referred to in in other relevant sections.

The adjudicator despite being another year older needed good stamina to traverse Monaghan Town by foot but the

experience was invigorating.

For a number of add ons to this section since last year an increase of one mark has been awarded.

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

To give in depth comment on the recent built environment improvements and general appearance of the town alone would require more than a page or two.

It has been more than a few years since the adjudicator has been to Monaghan and the street scape has improved immeasurably over those years helped in no small measure by the new developments which one assumes formed part of a town development plan some years back.

The most striking thing about Monaghan Town since this adjudicator last visited was the complete transformation of the whole Diamond core area.

The quality of footpaths and road surface plus the addition of new bollards, lamp standards and flower poles has given a new vibrancy to the whole part of town.

The list of projects outlined in your document under this section in the last year is impressive but it would be worthwhile identifying who actually were the main funders.

For instance MTT and HSE are noted as the main stake holders in the treatment of boundary walls leading to hospital grounds but where did the financial support and resources come from?

Were volunteers from the MTT actively involved in the work?

Good to note that some companies are giving practical support by offering discounts on items and materials.

The standard of shop front presentation is at a level that one does not often encounter in most other towns and villages

The following is a cross section of shop fronts that appealed to this particular adjudicator

Rocks Stationers and Tir Na nOg on ---Street, Albany on Market Street a very fine impressive shop.

As was noted in last year's report both the Bank of Ireland and the Westerna Hotel deserve credit for the manner of preservation of the fine heritage buildings that they occupy.

Flemings SUPERVALU premises is a well-managed establishment in the centre of the town Diamond.

Ulster Bank also deserves to be mentioned for its easy access and its accessibility for people with physical disabilities.

Boyles Menswear in the Diamond has a nice simple shop front.

Ashleigh House B&B on Dublin Street, DEA on Glaslough Street, McManus Pub, Wine Ways and O Donghaile as Gaeilge and Treanors Butchers were also admired.

The three Main Hotels one in the centre and the other two on the outskirts were well managed and recently refurbished.

These are just personal choices out of a wide selection of equally attractive options and it was also noted that on the day a number of premises were being refurbished.

The standard of presentation of public buildings is exemplified by the excellent modern designed and well maintained County Buildings on the Glen Road.

Monaghan Museum, which is now 42 years in existence, also deserves to be mentioned for its neat appearance.

The Marian Scout Hall on the Old Armagh Road was just painted and looked very well.

One negative is the condition of the metal panels on the wonderful historic building that houses the Dept of Justice of Justice.

They are rusting and look both unsightly and out of place in such a historic structure.

The Schools in both the core area and the outskirts were presented to a high standard.

The adjudicator specifically visited the old model school building the see the fruits of your endeavours and it was impressive.

The town possesses a number of Churches of different denominations and one can encounter these when undertaking a historic town trail tour.

St McCartans Cathedral is a very impressive structure overlooking the town.

Finally Project 20 listed on your entry form which is a follow on from the excellent Town Heritage Trail is an interesting and innovative project. You are wished well with that.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

The use of trees as an urban necessity for both practical and aesthetic reasons is very important; it was good to note that as part of your landscape plan that additional trees have been planted in areas of importance such as your car parks and housing estates.

The adjudicator visited a cross section areas mentioned and saw the simple but positive changes that a tree planting scheme can make to an area.

What was also noticeable was that new saplings planted were well protected.

So well done on this tree planting programme and in deed the on-going maintenance that ensures that existing mature tree specimens are monitored,

The shrub and flower beds visited and viewed were well maintained and looked after although one or two were in need of weeing and thinning out

The arrangement at the Margaret Skinnider Roundabout was particularly appealing with its mix of hardy annuals and perennial shrubs.

The new landscaping arrangement at St McCartan's Cathedral was visited and while this adjudicator is a fan of summer bedding annuals changing the format here was the practical option.

The Ulster Canal Car Park was clean and tidy and has benefited from the upgrade.

The planting at both sides of the Ballybay/Cavan Clones Road junction was also well populated with a mix of shrubs and perennials and looked well on the day.

Similarly the little triangle bed at the Derry/Town Centre Junction was very bright with an array of colourful lupins.

The new planting schemes, decorative flower boxes, three tiered tubs and the array of both public and private hanging baskets in the town centre added greatly to its appeal. There are a few planting arrangements particularly on the outskirts that need to be thinned, weeded and re vitalised. Some new phrases such as "Flowering Up" and "Window Box Brigade" appealed to the adjudicator. Overall the standard was good and the project work that you are involved in is very practical in that it can be done at a cost that is within your budget

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

This is a category that you have excelled in over the last few years and 2016 is no different. The adjudicator viewed your input in the dedicated Monaghan Biodiversity website and noted the excellent explanatory information that was contained within. Congratulations on winning the Notice Nature Awards for the last two years. The array and the scope of the projects listed this year are impressive and innovative. The most striking one that appealed to this adjudicator was the "discovery" of the old lock house and its restoration and adaptation as bat house. Hopefully the interpretative sign "Nightlife in Monaghan" doesn't get misinterpreted! Excuse the rather lame pun.

The Town and its surrounds has a myriad of natural wildlife habitats including the amazing town centre amenity Pater's Lake with its novel viewing and feeding stand as well as wonderful fountain and wildlife information panel. This is a great place for kids to become acquainted with the various species of wildlife. Another area is the Ulster Canal area which is now part of a new Greenway Walkway/Cycle way that crosses from end of the town to the other. This Greenway project which has proved very successful since it opened has the added option of an excellent biodiversity trail. The adjudicator was also taken with the Dispersed Urban Orchard project which has a unique element to it in that it both educates and allows residents to plant tree in their own gardens and indeed maybe in green areas in various. Birds by Bike and Monaghan is Wild are catchy titles for nature trail lectures and no doubt you are fortunate to have an independent ecologist of standing from within the county available to you. Overall some very simple but exciting projects have been put in place over the last few years. For the continuing positive contribution to this category you are awarded an additional mark.

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

The food cloud in conjunction with Monaghan County Council is a project that fits the ethos of this category. Stop Food Waste is the mantra that should be preached in every household in the country. In an ideal world it would be great if the country could adapt to a JIT (Just in Time) when it comes to buying food items. We all have been guilty of buying or overstocking food items and then realising that they end up in the fridge or cupboard till way past sell by date. The power of advertising gets us to buy more than we want. The star project in this category that appealed to this adjudicator was the Men's Shed up cycling project. Since Men's Shed became prominent in towns and villages it has become one of the prime drivers of voluntary community contribution. As well as serving its main objective of providing a place for men to come and interact it has provided an array of skills acquired through life that may have lay hidden dormant. Well done to the Committee for actively engaging with the local branch. The non-paper communication proposal is very worthwhile but may not excite every segment of the local community. Paper will be still used for communication purposes for some time to come yet. Other projects were in keeping with is required under this category and no doubt MTT was very much involved in the SWARM seminar which was held in conjunction with the Monaghan Tidy Towns Network earlier in the year. Some of the projects mentioned this year in your submission seemed to be alluded to in 2015 report but for a number of new ones you are awarded an additional mark.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Last year two extra marks were awarded under this category and judging by the adjudicators comments these were merited. The efforts of the Junior Committee were recognised as was the number of new initiatives that the committee had put in place to advocate the message of anti-litter and tidiness in general. This year also the number of litter projects undertaken are equally as impressive and as a committee you have done your utmost to promote the message of anti-litter, clutter free spaces and general tidiness. Some people will be very conscious and do their utmost to adhere to good practice others who have no interest in civic pride will ignore that's just the way it is. Litter control in the centre of the town and its very immediate extremities was quite good with the exception of a few spots that are on the radar of the committee. A few streets had excessive chewing gum implanted into the footpath and it looks a little unsightly given that main area of the town looks so well. I cannot recall any mention of a chewing gum removal initiative in your submission under this category but if I have missed I apologise

The adjudicator notes that you have identified the Scotstown Road as being the worst offender in terms litter. Unfortunately the adjudicator thinks that the problem is slightly understated in this area and on the Cavan Clones road.

In this area alone the adjudicator observed many examples of litter and also blatant littering by a number of youths on their way home from watching the Euro Qualifiers.

While one can make some allowance for youthful frustration the adjudicator was taken aback at the amount of "old" litter that was seen from the Margaret Skinnider Roundabout out the Cavan Clones on both sides

At the base of the wall of St Louis Infant old litter was observed, further on out cigarette butts and residue from traffic was very evident at base of wall near the Emo Service station.

Other examples were at the Council Machinery Yard, Old Armagh Road and on Canal Street and even at the entrance to the actual Ulster Canal Walk/Cycle Way.

The most obvious of all was the sight of two washing machines dumped in the gate of a field at the Monaghan Rugby Club /Monaghan Retail Park sign.

Actually those signs are looking the worse for wear

At the Sli na Slainte sign at Oriel Way a number of old cans were seen in the shrubbery.

One appreciates that some of this is outside the remit of any voluntary committee but maybe these areas should be brought to the notice of the relevant section on Monaghan County Council.

At the Scotstown Junction the seat and road sign are in need of painting and repair respectively.

These were observations were in one area only and other examples were seen on the Cootehill exit and Dublin Road.

Suffice to say that the committee needs to continue to engage with the council to address matters and bear in mind it's the duty of the authority under legislation to penalise people who dump items such as washing machines indiscriminately.

Another issue which is certainly not confined to Monaghan town is the placing of advertising billboards for events at every available corner.

Now the adjudicator is partial to a bit of country but it can be a bit disconcerting to come around every road junction and have Boogie in the Bog or the Tydavent Jamboree facing you.

The anti-dog fouling billboard is eye catching to say the least

The other initiatives that you are as a committee are involved in are noted and are very worthwhile and progressive but the basics need to be attended to first.

Evidence of the amount of litter encountered on one stretch is available on the folder file of the adjudicator.

As a committee you are doing your utmost to promote the message of anti-litter and general tidiness and the mark will remain the same as last year.

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

There was a large volume new housing developments in the outskirts of the during the boom years

For the most part the new houses and apartments have blended in with what was already in place.

One cannot but be impressed with presentation standards set by some of the more established housing areas, and there are many, in the town and its surrounds.

The Estate Enhancement Plans for Monaghan Town is a very valuable support mechanism for all these estates.

The adjudicator notes the detailed list support that you as a committee give to the various estates in the town and its surrounds and the residents have responded positively

Having visited areas, old and new from Corran on the Cootehill Road to Carannog a nice tidy little estate on the Glen Road to Cortolovin View on the Clones road and Glencove Manor on the Armagh road and up Pound Hill I can vouch for the fact that most are presented to a very good standard.

There are a few areas that are punctuated with some untidy premises and to be honest not everyone buys into tidy towns but the committee is doing its utmost to convert everyone to the idea of presenting their properties in an acceptable fashion.

The following were the personal choices of this adjudicator; Tully Estate a very compact older estate that is very well maintained, Cathedral Walk a nice development with green area and well presented shrub bed at the entrance.

St MaCartans Terrace another older and established housing development that has an expansive green area.

Well done to all those residents that have made the effort ensure that their respective estates are presented in accordance with best practice.

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

The approach roads into the town were for the most part well maintained and enhanced by appropriate planting.

Quite a lot of effort has gone into making sure that approach roads are looked after properly and this necessitates good interaction between the committee and the county council.

The list of new improvements as outlined in your document is impressive.

It would be neigh impossible to comment on all and no doubt the adjudicator missed more than a few in his travails,

Overall there were no obviously unsightly areas on the way in from all sides

The Junction at the Scotstown/Clones Road has already been mentioned in another section.

The Greenway will attract a lot of locals and visitors and it's important that areas adjacent to it are kept well.

The repair work at fence at Tom Young's Wood was noted as the adjudicator was on another mission to this area.

The revitalisation of the Oriel Filling Station was also noted and a simple coat of paint makes a positive difference to any building or boundary wall.

Overall the standard was good but room for improvement in two areas that unfortunately the adjudicator failed to note properly and apologies for this oversight.

Last year this category received a 2 mark increase and this year that mark is retained.

Concluding Remarks:

It was good to come back to Monaghan after a good number of years and see the positive changes that have occurred particularly in the core area.

The suggested driving route was considered but quite a lot of the out skirts of the town were examined by leaving car at a particular point and taking shanks mare.

Saw more and it contributed to increasing the fitness levels of the adjudicator.

You are wished well for the future and the best of luck with all those new projects that are in the pipe line.