

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **323**
Category: **E** Date(s): **19/06/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	46	48
Streetscape & Public Places	50	47	48
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	39	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	38	39
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	20	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	35	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
TOTAL MARK	450	316	323

Community – Your Planning and Involvement / An Pobal - Pleanáil agus Rannpháirtíocht:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte róimh Muineachán/Monaghan chuig Comortas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu agus chuig Céiliúadh go Bliain an Chomortais! This adjudicator has not been to Monaghan since 2012: the many positive advances encountered this time are in conceptualisation/organisation as much as in realisation/action: the former are the influences upon the latter. Especially notable is the institution of the Junior TTs and their work ; also involvements with e.g. the Beekeeper's Association, the Irish Wildlife Trust, the Environmental and Heritage Departments of the Local Authority, the County Museum, Monaghan Transition Group, Teach na Daoine: from your notes, all these, and others, emerge as helpful to your plans and thence to the town, to the evident admiration of residents. Your "Monaghan: Biodiversity Town" is your 3-Year-Development Plan with emphasis on the importance of biodiversity and of spreading an understanding of the term in all its implications. It is a pioneer document and should be made widely available. On the practical side the actions for 2017-20 are succinctly set out within – which is most important – a timeframe for each. The various existing TT headings are viewed from the perspective of biodiversity: this is the most innovative document of its kind yet seen, anywhere.

Streetscape & Public Places / Sráid-Dreach & Áiteanna Poiblí:

The improvements to the town centre which this adjudicator last saw did not extend to Dublin Street, Old Cross Square or Dawson Street which now joins them in what a Northern visitor remarked is "A very pretty town!" Lest they seem unconsidered due to familiarity, here is a checklist of outstandingly well maintained older buildings: most architecturally significant: THE Market House and Latlurcan chapel; most magnificent: the Cathedral; most dignified: the Court House; most quaint: the interior of St Patrick's church; most quirky: the Belgium Square complex; etc. The most eye-catching new building is the Elim Pentecostal Church. It is interesting how so many 'backs' by Peter's Lake have gradually been replaced by smart businesses. The superb County Museum is in dire need of more space, a purpose-designed modern building worthy of its collections. Several imaginative murals were favourably noted. Beechhill College is very well presented on its fine campus. The interior of the Shopping Mall is quite smart – chic, indeed; the exterior seems dull and 'dated' in an interesting way that much older buildings are not. An additional storey or two at Heaton's would improve the line of the streetscape and conceal ugly 'backs'. Ongoing cosmetic upkeep of certain neglected buildings such as the Assembly Rooms and the Railway Station –the GNR sculpture is terrific! – is not the full solution but is a real help.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Planting and floral adornment throughout the town and on the outskirts are first class in places. It is astonishing how the four beds at the cross roads by the shopping centre manage to survive the fumes. Good luck for the already charming garden at the astonishingly neglected Lock House. The walkways and sensory garden at St

Davnet's caught the attention partly because of not having been visited before: the new orchard was not found in spite of your map. (Perhaps the many interesting buildings here should be considered under 'Streetscape' above: suffice to say here that some seemed to be in need of new purposes; they also add significantly to the very varied 'heritage' building stock.) It is very good to read that with the Wildlife Trust you planted 15,00 bulbs for spring showing. This adjudicator does not like 'formal' urns at a 'natural' place like Peter's Lake but this is not a marking matter. The clean and colourful playground opposite Teach na Daoine was admired.

Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality / An Dúlra agus an Bhithéagsúlacht i do cheantar:

Spelling out the word 'biodiversity' in attractive varied planting must spread the message considerably. It is excellent that you are training Council staff and just as excellent that they should accept your instruction. "650 trees planted" – is this over the past year? if so, Wow! It is certainly prudent to take advice about species and where different species will flourish. An interesting idea that you put forward is that an arboretum can be a trail of trees as distinct from a planned park. (The Health Park has several of the qualities of an arboretum.) The Tree Trail map and inventory was appreciated. Beehives, pollinator-friendly raised beds, the presence of fruit trees all add to the town's natural resources. The regeneration of Rossmore Park is a vast project; inevitably the park looks unsure of itself at present. Much good work was seen to be in progress and several very fine ancient trees, both coniferous and deciduous, were seen at random where once there was probably a prescribed layout. Thickets will need thinning out. The Ulster Canal Greenway somehow does yet make its presence felt probably because the once very visible tow-path was destroyed, but it suddenly emerges here and there in many spots; the ultimate objective of joining Middleton with Smithborough is stupendous! Outdoor 'classrooms' at St Davnet's and near the Clones road is a most imaginative initiative. Observing the town from a height beside the Cathedral in summer it looks like a woodland interspersed by buildings rather than the other way about. This adjudicator has a special interest in boxes for the spotted flycatcher but not for discussion here; it is good to read that you and the men's shed have supplied bird tables throughout the town.

Sustainability – Doing more with less / Inmharthanacht - Mórán ar an mbeagán:

It is good to learn that you encourage residents by giving a step-by-step introduction to this exceptionally important topic. Allotments seen at Killygoan and Mullaghmatt looked serious; the latter has the appearance of a community garden, creating additional visual interest. Congratulations to the Neighbourhood Restaurant in changing from plastic to paper straws, a small point one might think, but emblematic. "Monaghan is at the forefront of food production in Ireland" – it may be, but this adjudicator is not convinced that all producers of poultry products do so humanely. The list of enterprises on pp. 44-48 demonstrate the breadth and variety of the initiatives which you have encouraged or are associated with: congratulations. We would be glad of a list of schools that participate in the Green Flag programme, showing what awards have been made to date. Green flags were not in evidence on the date of the visit but that does not mean they have not been won: it is impossible to imagine that the schools of Monaghan are not heavily involved. Thank you for the impressive documentation on the SuperValu Schools award and the Eco-Unesco competition, how they were followed-through and the benefits gained. We will be interested to hear the result of the first round of Project Zero Waste.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

It is good to know that you take part in the annual nationwide Spring Clean. Well done to the County Council for providing funds for a clean-up of the canal and to the Civil Defence for trawling Peter's Lake for litter. The 'Litter Vigilante' scheme must be working well for the town was virtually litter-free on the date of the visit. Congratulations to the volunteers who regularly pick up litter. It is wretched that civic-minded people feel the need to clean up after their irresponsible neighbours but splendid that they should do so. The painting of wooden fences, mostly on the outskirts of the town and in housing areas, is applauded. Small incidents of dereliction were seen but nothing significant. Have you considered providing a wall where potential graphic artists can legally try out their talents? A surprisingly untidy car-park was seen opposite the Elim church. A terrace of shops on Market road was badly in need of freshening up with paint.

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

The mid 20c Local Authority development St Patrick's Terrace has survived the years remarkably well. So has the wonderfully picturesque Belgium Park. The terraced street homes on Hill Street and North Road add dignity to the town. Cathedral Walk needs nothing to improve its appearance except a freshening-up of the boundary wall at the summit. Latlorcan Way/Court seems to have 'settled in' but still has an uneasy air; it is extraordinary to see some untenanted homes at a time of national housing crisis. A nice mix of house styles at Drumbear Wood caught the attention; trees are approaching maturity and work was in progress thinning the shrubbery. An interesting diversity of house designs also gives distinction to Coolshanagh View; here the shrubberies are excellent; an untended site might be incorporated into the former. The background of older trees gives a welcome feeling of seclusion to Oakridge: some gables and walls need freshening up. Planting of fruit trees and bird houses at the brick-faced homes of Woodlands were very favourably noted, also the beech and mixed hedging. Some recently planted trees at the Mullaghmatt housing development need attention. You do an enormous amount of admirable work in housing developments; it can happen that residents come to expect the TT volunteers will do the jobs they are loath to do themselves or can not be troubled with; TT personnel should only help in cases where residents are seen to be unable to undertake work themselves for reasons of health, age or social incapacity.

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

The Margaret Skinnader roundabout, appropriately at the Scotstown roundabout, is particularly effective because

of the high-growing plants. Industrial/commercial installations on the Castleblayney road are well kept and give a positive notion of Monaghan to the arriving visitor. On a much higher note so does the educational campus on the Armagh road and the floral displays at Silverstream (not now a TT entry). The shopping mall at Cortolvin is exceptionally tidy even if the building does not herald Monaghan to the visitor as 'a pretty town'. The NI Ordnance Survey map shows a completed relief-road from Cortolvin to Coolshanagh; maybe this is wishful thinking but a major discrepancy is Monaghan's traffic management and the enormous commercial vehicles that pass through the central streets creating noise, fumes and inconvenience within the 'pretty town'. It must be said that the car-parks in the town centre are spic and span, but there seem to be acres of them! In Kilkenny concealed high-rise parking has conspicuously reduced the need of surface parking.

Concluding Remarks:

The energy and vision of the Monaghan Tidy Towns committee and its associates, especially in matters relating to the natural environment, is enormously impressive.