

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan - Muineachán** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **328**
Category: **E** Date(s): **24/06/2019**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2018 | Mark Awarded 2019 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community – Your Planning and Involvement | 60 | 48 | 49 |
| Streetscape & Public Places | 60 | 48 | 48 |
| Green Spaces and Landscaping | 60 | 40 | 41 |
| Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality | 50 | 39 | 42 |
| Sustainability – Doing more with less | 50 | 21 | 21 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 53 | 53 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 35 | 35 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 39 | 39 |
| TOTAL MARK | 470 | 323 | 328 |

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Monaghan- Muineachán páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. I thank you for your application and accompanying documentation. I found your application to be well put together giving clear and concise information pertinent to the questions being asked. Your dedicated committee of 15 individuals supported by the entire community have achieved a lot over the last 20 years. The endeavour award received in 2012 seems to have been the real catalyst to drive your committee forward and to galvanise the entire community to come together and support your efforts. The list of agencies bodies and businesses that support your activities is truly astonishing with an excess of 40 number noted. It is worth remembering that liaising with community groups the local authority other state agencies and local businesses is a key component for consideration in this category. It is my opinion that you clearly understand this requirement. Your Annual Awards night now in its 12th year not only continues to raise your profile bring on new members but also provides an opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of the vast network of volunteers that support your work on the ground. I am particularly interested in your Community Heroes award that is given to individuals and groups on your awards night. I believe that we all need acknowledgement and your Community Heroes award does this effectively. Your close cooperation with the local authority is acknowledged and encouraged. Your representation on The Town Team and other development committees gives your committee a voice. The County Monaghan network of TidyTowns and Residents' Committees is an excellent initiative and I congratulate all involved. The pivotal role that your committee has on this network ensures that you have an influence beyond the boundaries of your town. Evidence shows that you are a committee that understands the importance of communication, getting your message out there through a vast array of different media. Your active engagement with all 5 primary schools is a significant achievement. In this regard most notable is the development of your junior TidyTowns committees throughout several the estates. Initiatives such as this ensures that bright and well-informed generation of young people will be there well into the future. A generation that will have pride in their town. Your plans to develop Monaghan as a biodiverse town will give a well-placed strong identity to your town and in turn allows you to promote and protect your rich diverse natural heritage. It is obvious that your committee understands the importance of strategic planning as an imperative component in this category. Your biodiversity plan for Monaghan 2017 to 2020 was described by my predecessor as the most innovative document of its kind ever seen I concur with this view.

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

Monaghan Public Realm Plan 2019 to 2021 provides guidance in respect of this category for your town. The projects noted as Tactical Urbanism involving low cost temporary change are welcomed and will assist in addressing some of the observations noted below. I noted your lobbying of the Local Authority to CPO derelict properties on Dublin street of which a number were noted. On a positive note Dublin Street has benefitted from the provision of a very decent decorative lighting scheme and all the overhead wire scapes have been undergrounded.

However, the street in general needs attention. A lot of weed growth was detected on roofs Gutters and eaves. Also, generally the laneways were found to be in a poor state with very few exceptions. The use of corrugated plastic boarding used for both advertising and to identify the businesses was prominent. Some buildings presented well on Dublin Street, - the building trading as Ashleigh B&B with the floral displays of a high standard. As did the building trading as Monaghan Boot Company and Peaky Blinders Public House. A few of the back gardens of the houses and businesses on the southern side of the street that borders the car park were found to have infestations of Japanese Knotweed. A treatment programme should be undertaken as soon as possible any proposed works must be accompanied and guided by a detailed management plan to treat this invasive weed carried out by a competent professional. See more at <http://invasivespeciesireland.com>

In contrast the Diamond looked superb. Minimal amounts of litter were noted. The Western Arms Hotel is a fantastic building occupying a key location on the diamond. Floral displays were found to be of the highest standard with the recently painted decorative railings giving prominence to the building. The neighbouring ALMA House looked well also. The floral displays mounted on the Public Lighting standards were found to be well maintained. A small amount of movable/collapsible signage boards the type that can be retrieved from the street and stored inside overnight were prominent on the street. These signs are obstacles to pedestrians and less able members of our community see more at www.universaldesign.ie Consideration should be given to developing an appropriate signage policy through the Local Authority to address this issue. The Hornbeam trees located in containerised planters should be replanted directly into the ground. Also noted were some Oak trees surrounded by large tree guards. These guards are no longer required and should be removed. The first Presbyterian church located on Dublin Street adjacent to Old Cross Square is an impressive building. Assisted by community employment workers I was lucky enough to gain access to the building. I learned that the building is also used to accommodate community events. The grounds of the building were well maintained and of note was the boundary railing that was recently painted. An outhouse on the grounds fronting onto Dublin street would benefit from repainting. St Patricks Church of Ireland looked great and the grounds were well maintained. Consider upgrading the blue coloured information panel at the entrance. The plaza area to the front of the Court House offers a generous well designed and constructed civic space with a lot of opportunity. Some weed growth was noted on top of the wall to the left-hand side of the building that serves the access from the Car Park at the rear. I note your public Realm Plan has also identified this location for a project proposal. I am delighted to learn of your 'Train Sculpture' and note that the piece has been constructed by the same sculptor that completed the impressive 'Hive of Knowledge' piece.' This continuity is important.

The Dawson monument a tall obelisk which occupies a prominent location. A fabulous striking piece. Consideration should be given to enhancing the floral displays at the base of the monument to reflect that prominence of the location and the inclusion of a simple information panel. The wall linking Bar One Racing and Church Square to Market Street appeared clean recently painted and well maintained. Although advertising panels (DV8) were mounted on the wall I thought this was done sensitively. The gable end building at the junction of Mill Street and Church lane currently for sale detracts from this area. The building line on the North Road containing An Poc Fada public house is impressive and particularly colourful and I note the direct involvement of your committee. The temporary collapsible street signage (local Meat Shop) did detract from the area. Street furniture throughout the town was found to be generally well maintained. The old post box adjacent to the Ulster Bank was adorned with a beautiful crest but does require refreshing. The building facade on Market Street presented well with no obvious derelict properties. The efforts put in by Terrys Lounge and Gillanders shop were noted favourably. In some of the Car Parks Trees were planted into small tree bays that restricted their growth. Noted tree ties not adjusted, stakes requiring removal and often the proliferation of litter at the base of these trees. The care afforded to mature trees in car parks was found to be inadequate and appeared to lack arboricultural expertise. At the bottom of Dublin Street adjacent to Old Cross Square a bilingual sign noting residents parking only was nailed to a tree. I note from your application significant recent improvements in old cross square with the return of the sundial, well done to all involved. No doubt the area is the better for these improvements. Consider the addition of a suitably designed information panel pertaining to this historical piece. I found Rushes History of Monaghan to be particularly informative in this regard.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

A visit to the Park around Peters Lake was delightful. The town is so lucky to have such a wonderful natural park in such a prominent location. Of concern was an infestation of Japanese knotweed located near the water course. From a biodiversity point of view this is a serious concern and here again I reiterate the advice given under the previous heading for another infestation noted. However due to the prominent location of this infestation, the rich biodiversity value the park has and knowing the difficulty in treating infestations near water courses I advise swift action guided by competent experts before what appears to be a relatively juvenile infestation is spread. I had some difficulty in finding the Rossmore Forest Park. However, I am delighted I persevered. The Giants Project is a brilliant one on all fronts well done and I will certainly return to see the completed project, the Partnership approach that underlines this project must be acknowledged. The 'Hug a Tree Day' is something both unique and simple, well done to all involved. Your ongoing tree planting programme with over 700 trees planted is staggering amount. However, in some estates visited - most notably Killygoan, Cortolivin Road, Oriel Park and Mullaghmatt, mechanical damage by grass cutting equipment and possibly strimmer's along with tree stakes needing removal and ties needing adjusting or removal was noted. I would advise more care and attention to your existing stock of trees in addition to expanding your tree stock. The mature canopy of trees was discovered at St Davnet's Hospital with the vast array of species present is astonishing. Also, the mature trees on the grounds of St Louis secondary school. Consideration should be given to Arboriculturally accessing trees throughout the town and imposing Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) on specimens that are deemed significant. The proposed project involving a welcome sign noting BIODIVERSITY is innovative and different and reflects the ethos of your town. Slight note of caution in creating elaborate landscaping schemes that have high maintenance requirements and may result in overstretching

your already committed committee and your network of volunteers. Your project at St Davnet's Walkway with both seating and sensory planting is to be commended. Again, very evident here is your partnership approach and I am delighted to have noted the involvement of the Men's Shed Organisation. The Planting at the Margaret Skinnader Roundabout is particularly impressive and justified at the main entrance to the town. The botanical information panels at Cortolvin housing estate which forms part of the Monaghan tree trail was noted as accurate and presented on robust and well-designed panels. The Ulster Canal Greenway is 150-year-old real wildlife corridor. I was particularly impressed by the Biodiversity Focus that defines the project. It is managed in a sensitive manner strictly considering the rich biodiversity of the site, the ethos of your town is evident here. I noted no generic signs or information panels all were site specific surveys carried out on this site which further underlines your pursuit of excellence.

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

I visited your dedicated online biodiversity site and was seriously impressed. In my opinion you are national exemplifiers in this category. You have sought guidance from qualified, experienced and competent experts. Your plan MONAGHAN: A Biodiversity town 2017 to 2020 is guiding your efforts in a structured, phased and focused way noting your key theme Biodiversity. Your plan notes two non-native species present. However, I would suggest that more detailed mapping takes place to identify species present categorise according to risk posed and digitally map locations of infestations before any treatment programme begins. As noted previously professional competent advice should be sought. My concern relates to Japanese Knotweed as it outcompetes our native vegetation this weed can have a detrimental effect on our native biodiversity. The 'Get Buzzing' national pollinator award was a significant achievement as was bringing the message of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan to the wider community at the allotment site as is the bee friendly and ladybird friendly boxes. During adjudication as mentioned in the previous category I found locations of trees that formed part of your tree trail. Does a map of the entire trail exist? I visited the Mullaghmat community Garden and unfortunately could not get access. Nevertheless, I was able to appreciate the time and investment put into this wonderful resource compliments to all involved. The Swift Walk and Talk event held earlier this year for National Swift Week is further evidence of your commitment to this important category. Your Bee-friendly with lawns and gardens is wonderful initiative not only does it spread an important message it also delivers results. Your project involving the Dispersed Urban Orchard is fantastic and its association with your Junior Tidy Towns Committee gives it an added dimension. Your achievements are considerable 'Keep it up'.

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

Projects numbered 55 to 61 in your application pertaining to this category were not attributed lettering (N) (M) (FP) to establish the status of the project. However, information given in the "Date commissioned" box in your application provided some guidance. The Plexit project is certainly innovative and I note that the Local Authority assisted in developing the project with additional funding. I would have appreciated a little more background information on the Voice Survey and Awareness Project. Project number 71 in your application involving making your committees communications as environmentally friendly as possible and the establishment of a Town Team newsletter denotes a committee that practices what it preaches. I am delighted to see the continued involvement of the Men's Shed organisation in the 'Upcycling' project. I noted last year's adjudicator emphasized the importance of Green Flags for schools and suggested a list of schools that participate in the programme and achievements to date. Thank you for the information in relation to St Mary's Boys School.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Several incidents of graffiti were noted in particularly in laneways. From the evidence gathered I am confident it is the same person that is responsible for all the incidents. It would be great to see a concerted effort by the Gardaí to prosecute this individual. In general, the town core was found to be litter free particularly the Diamond area. However significant litter levels were found in all car parks visited. The Car Park at the rear of the Diamond Centre was found to be heavily littered. Laneways off Dublin Street were found to be littered and poorly maintained. Your anti-litter initiative at the front of entrance to Diamond Screen 4 cinema and the association with names of movies is unique and thought provocative, well done. Attempting to deal with litter can be an overwhelming task. I find a shared responsibility between community and Local Authority with clear responsibility for specific sites/areas given to community or local authority often yields better results. Your litter vigilante initiative is to be commended. I note that this is the second year of the initiative and would be grateful if you would confirm (future application) approximate numbers of people or voluntary hours committed. The Local Authorities investment in CCTV on Ulster Canal will assist with the litter at this location. The Clean-up of the Ulster Canal is a major project and I congratulate you on securing significant funding to commence with the works, best of luck with this.

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

Efforts put in by individual estates and individual houses in these estates are both acknowledged and admired. I visited Teach Na nDaoine family Resource Centre and was so impressed to learn about the good work that is done here. I also visited some of the recreational resources in the area and was particularly impressed with the fabulous recreational resources in Oriel Park. Well done to all involved. A very pretty terrace of houses five number was noted on Horseshoe Bridge, all properties were exceptionally well maintained, and the gardens were a joy to see particularly the garden of number one. Tree care as noted above under the heading Green spaces and Landscaping is something that needs to be addressed. Evidence of mechanical damage to trees from grass maintenance equipment has been noted as a serious issue which should be brought to the immediate attention of the Local Authority for estates that they are responsible for maintaining. A good platform to address the same issue may be your wonderful project involving Estate Enhancement Plans. Your initiative involving painting Metal Railings involves a lot of work, but as you have demonstrated this is something that your dedicated committee and volunteers are not

afraid of. This is effectively demonstrated in the comprehensive list of works carried out in 5 areas noted. It is great to see the good work done as part of the Mullaghmat Remedial scheme and note the final phase is now underway.

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

Your approach roads presented well. In general, I noted areas set aside to encourage biodiversity contrasting with areas that were well maintained. Floral displays and planting schemes were confined to areas of high impact junctions and roundabouts etc. The use of carpet roses was admired on a number of approach roads particularly in the Glenn Road and Park Road areas opposite the junction to Scoil Mhuire Muineachan. The proliferation of corrugated plastic signs is a concern on some approach roads with a particularly large amount noted on the entrance road that serves OAKRIDGE housing estate. Your public Realm Plan 2019 to 2021 suggesting embracing the theme of Tactical Urbanism and street art could be used effectively to enhance Laneways.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to have adjudicated Monaghan. We hope that this report helps to provide guidance for your Committee and all associated with your efforts. The natural beauty and resources of the area are breath taking. Monaghan as a Biodiversity Themed Town is an ideal fit. Some of the issues highlighted in this report require resources from the Local Authority which are not always available.

The devoted efforts of your Committee together with the partnerships you have forged with different agencies combined with the natural beauty of the area will serve your association well in this competition into the future.