

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newtowncashel** Ref: **485**
County: **Longford** Mark: **320**
Category: **A** Date(s): **15/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	45	46
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	41	41
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	45	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	34	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61	62
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	32
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	43	43
TOTAL MARK	450	317	320

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Newtowncashel is very welcome to the 2017 Supervalu Tidy Towns competition and for this adjudicator it was a first visit to a village, nestled on the east shore of Lough Ree, which certainly did not disappoint.

Thank you kindly for the excellent and concise application, 2017 village plan and the exceptional descriptive map of the village which was such a help to the adjudicator in identifying places of interest and works completed.

Your committee membership of 11 is certainly proactive in its approach to planning and completing tasks within given timescales.

It's good to note that you have a direct link to the local school in that the principal is an active member of the committee and projects involving school children will be given due recognition.

The list of agencies and private businesses that you interact with is impressive but also in practical terms these are sources of sponsorship, advice, resources and possible grant aid support through the County PPN Structure.

The fact that the village is one of the high achievers in the competition probably gives you a bit of extra leverage with Longford County Council and other agencies such as TUS.

Methods of communication are varied and for the most part traditional for instance word of mouth is very important in a small community such as Newtown Cashel.

The Village has forty years experience in the competition having reached the ultimate goal that of National Winner in 1980 and it has maintained a high standard down through the years.

The adjudicator was impressed with the Village Plan as the narrative was engaging and the work plan is practical and achievable.

Areas of the plan will be dealt with in other sections of this report.

Credit is due to all who contributed to this plan which encapsulates the uniqueness of your village in a very simple but hugely effective way.

On slightly sombre note it is sad to see three mainstays of any village close and this was one of the first observations that the adjudicator made during the walkabout.

That aside this plan will form the basis for future years ahead and you are wished well with the implementation of tasks within.

An additional mark is awarded under this category.

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

The recommendations and comments made in last year's report have been addressed as per your input under this category in the application form.

The Church of the Nativity is indeed a very impressive ecclesiastical building and holds a central position in the core of the village.

The grounds were maintained to a very high standard and parking facilities were more than adequate.

One of the features for this adjudicator was the very eye-catching colourful church sign inside the boundary wall. The completion of various works such as the painting of the shop and post office were noted and there is no point in repeating them back as part of this report except to acknowledge that these refurbishments have a positive effect on the village built environment.

Yes indeed it is goods to note that a local young couple have come back and taken over the local pub, they deserve the support of the community for such an undertaking.

Well done to the local Cashel GAA Club for maintaining their grounds to a high standard and no doubt that this is one of the main focal points of the local community.

St Marys National School looked resplendent with its new extension and ancillary features such as goods parking. The school has an up to date website listing its activities so well done to teachers and pupils combined.

The Garda Station which came in for some negative comment in last year's report had a for sale sign – Is it up for sale again?

Rest assured this adjudicator did not venture over the wall on this occasion!

It looks like that it has been re vitalised a little since last year.

Road surfaces were for the most part in good condition but some of the road markings especially at the GAA Grounds Junction need to be repainted.

Some very nice stone walls were observed during the adjudication walkabout.

The new Longford Tourist Sign opposite the Church is a very worthwhile addition to the village as it provides vital tourist and fauna and flora information associated with the surrounding area.

Credit too to the HSE as the Health Centre looked very well on the day with a myriad of nasturtiums offering a colourful backdrop.

In the past this adjudicator had reason to bring to notice the poor condition of Health Centres around the country but praise is due where effort has been made as in this case.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

Cognisance has been taken of your comment in relation access to area near shop and this is something that is outside a committee's control.

This garden area is a quite attractive feature and it's a pity that it is not accessible to public.

The row of monardella as one enters the village from the Lanesborough Ballymahon Junction is indeed very inviting and come late summer these will have an abundance of colourful blooms.

The new hazel trees planted at the Quarry Park are maturing nicely and these will form a very striking backdrop in the years to come.

The aforementioned amenity park is central to the village because of its distinctive features and the ongoing work that is outlined in your submitted plan will ensure that it will be maintained and improved upon as the need arises. It is quite a large area and credit is due to those in the committee who look after its upkeep.

The shrub and flower bed inside the wall where the GAA Lotto Sign is permanently sited is a little sparse in parts and needs to be populated more maybe by adding some spirea and euonymus plus some colourful double begonias to fill spaces.

One notes the reasoning for the siting of the Lotto notice board but is it the ideal location?

The mass of colour provided by masses of nasturtiums at the HSE building has been commented upon under the previous section.

The shrub bed at the new Longford Tourist sign was a little uneven in terms of shrubs planted

It looks as if some large mature shrubs were sacrificed to accommodate the sign hence the imbalance.

Some very fine and attractive private gardens were viewed during the visit; one cottage type garden at Mike Flynn's house took the eye.

Green areas were well maintained and these were complemented by bog oak sculptures by Casey Sculptures.

Overall the standard was on par with what was reported on last year,

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

Excellent approach in this category has resulted in a consistent high mark being achieved.

It is the opinion of this adjudicator that in order to create a greater awareness of the wildlife habitats of one's area that it is imperative that you engage with personnel that have experience in these matters whether it be a local wildlife enthusiast or in your case both the county environmental officer and wildlife ranger.

Some excellent initiatives have taken place since last year and the adjudicator observed swift boxes, bat boxes and the hedgehog house in the National School field.

Well done the TUS scheme workers who constructed these boxes during the winter months.

The participation of farmers in the GLAS scheme can only have such positive effects in creating the best use for marginalised land and of course the preservation and promotion of various species of wildlife.

Well done to all who engaged in the work undertaken in this category.

An increase of one mark is merited.

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

This is a category that has created quite a lot of anxiety for committees around the country.

A few years back many were not able to grasp the concept which may have been a little complex.

Since then the category has become a lot clearer and the main objective is to promote "the reduction of production" of unnecessary waste and to help reduce the large volumes that go to landfill each year.

The initiatives, such as the public lighting being LED converted, that you have mentioned are very acceptable but there is a lot more potential for you to work on.

As a committee you have a good working relationship with the county environmental officer and it would be

worthwhile to meet with a view to getting more ideas for projects under SWARM.

Last year if I can recall correctly Monaghan County Council had a day seminar specifically given over to this category and there is access to the presentations via Monaghan County Council website.

If not Longford County environmental officer should be in a position to access them via his counterpart in Monaghan.

Also consult the following websites www.localpreventoin.ie and www.greenhomes.ie for further ideas that could trigger off some relevant mini projects for the years ahead.

www.sustainableprocessing.ie is another website that gives one an insight into the circular economy.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Congratulations on the work that you have done over the last year in trying to encourage people to be anti-litter and making it known that it helps the village no end in terms of appearance, tidiness and environment protection.

You are fortunate that as your village is quite small it does not have the same concerns about hidden litter black spots as other bigger villages and towns have.

Good to note that you have regular rotas and well done to whoever is in charge of this system as organising rotas can be difficult.

The Garda Station which came in for comment last year certainly looks as if it has been improved upon and some attractive flower boxes adorned the window sills.

The school was in exceptional condition in terms of tidiness.

The bottle bank area was well maintained and tidy.

A number of improvements since last year have merited an increase of an additional mark.

One of those improvements resulted from consultation with a local property owner which shows the value of good one to one communication which is often lost in the era of What's App and Twitter.

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

Back areas and indeed farm yards were in good condition and whilst there were one or two boundary walls that needed painting it would be churlish of this adjudicator not to acknowledge of the efforts of local residents who continue to present their premises to the highest standards.

The Village as you rightly state benefits from the fact that it does not have any housing development clusters.

The construction and occupation of the new town or should I say village houses can only have a positive effect on a village which states its population as 50 !!

Private residences as stated in a previous sentence were presented to a very high standard and the adjudicator was impressed with the way some of the newly designed properties blend in with the established houses in the village and its surrounds.

The standard was on par with last year.

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

The roads in to the village were presented to a very acceptable standard and were complemented by excellent and attractive name signs.

Green verges were trimmed in accordance with good practice and in the case of the road into the village from the Lanesborough/ Ballymahon Road junction that entrance was further enhanced by the row of montebrietia which will bloom later in July.

Works at the school has resulted in an excellent traffic management system with new road markings.

The attractive notice board at the Church of the Nativity has been already mentioned.

You state that road markings have been upgraded this year but there is still a portion undone at the GAA Grounds School road junction.

The signs mentioned last year have been encased into the new boundary wall at the school and look an attractive feature.

The new notice board opposite the Church seen as "valuable communications/information source" did not have any information on it on the day in question

Also the plaque that commemorates the planting of an Oak Tree by Bertie Ahern needs cleaning.

The committee should also consider making more of the plaque that commemorates John Keegan Casey on the Hill Hall Wall

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to visit Newtown Cashel for the very first time and embrace its tranquillity and attractiveness.

As a committee you have ensured that the village retains its very high standards in the competition.

You are wished well for the future.