

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Corofin** Ref: **64**
County: **Clare** Mark: **269**
Category: **B** Date(s): **05/06/2014**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014
Community Involvement & Planning	60	37
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	34
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	27
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	55
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33
TOTAL MARK	450	269

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Ta Fáilte Romhat Cora Finne. Welcome Corofin to the Super Valu 2014 National Tidy Towns competition. You have a core group of 10 people. You meet monthly. You report to the tourism group on a regular basis. You strive to be fully representative.

Various statutory agencies - as well as local businesses and private individuals have assisted you. You communicate through traditional communication methods, as well as using modern communication methods – a website and Facebook page. This is good.

The National School has two Green Flags. Both the school and youth club get involved with your work. You say that your involvement in the competition has brought people together and improved the quality of people's lives. This is good to hear.

Your map was helpful to the adjudicator – particularly as you showed your projects for this year highlighted in yellow on both the Entry Form and on the map. You did not number your 2012/2014 projects sequentially through the Entry Form as requested in the guidelines but this did not interfere too much with clarity. You numbered the projects with all the other landmarks you wish to draw our attention to, but you clearly highlighted the 2013/2014 projects and this was a big help to us. You put a lot of effort into your map and we thank you for that - as a good map is invaluable to an adjudicator.

Thank you for your three-year plan. However, we consider this one-page document to be a broad statement of your policy and proposed projects. You indicate that if you are successful in the Public Area Enhancement Scheme 'it would push through various parts of your plan'. In 2015 could you please submit a plan which is divided into each individual year? This focuses your mind on what is achievable annually. It also requires to be updated annually. Your three year plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult locally in preparing such a plan. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to Corofin in drawing up your work programme. Please refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five-year plan. It is essential to progress in the competition and to gain extra marks under this particular category that you submit such a plan in 2015. We also received the photographs relating to your work. The 'before' and 'after' photographs are very useful tool an adjudicator.

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

We are happy to hear that you have nine protected structures in your village. This is a responsibility but also an

opportunity. No doubt you have been in contact with the County Architectural Conservation Officer in relation to these structures.

We observed work ongoing at St Patrick's Hall on adjudication day. We particularly admired the 1945 Irish inscription with the old Irish script. We are very happy to see that this is being conserved. This is a lovely building of scale in sympathy with the village, and it is good to see that it is now going to find a new life. It is also an important entry point to the village.

The Clare Heritage Centre – the disused Church of Ireland looked very well on its elevation facing the town. However the rear elevation extension area facing the housing estate adjacent needs upgrading. We admired the stone sign in Irish and English at the entrance to the Heritage Centre.

We admired the grotto made of local dry stone. It is very well maintained. We would suggest that you re plant the flowers in the composite type pots into the soil and remove the composite type planter which adds nothing to the natural looking grotto area.

On the road to the national school there is a vacant very fine two-storey house on the right-hand side opposite the side of St. Patrick's Hall. Its windows are boarded with plywood. It certainly would benefit from repainting. Nonetheless we admired the very good red gates to this property, which were very well presented. Its out-buildings and lateral boundary walls along the roadside would also benefit from repainting.

The Catholic Church is an interesting building with its external stone-carved face. Although we do not adjudicate on the interiors of building we did go to see the Harry Clark stained glass. As with most churches that have such works of art – there is no indication internally or externally for the unaware visitor of the existence of such artwork. Opposite the church's front elevation the red galvanised roof of a two-storey house would benefit from repainting.

The Genealogical Centre building had far too much signage attached to its front elevation. This detracted from this area of good buildings including both churches and neat street houses. We admired the bright red pump at this location.

The hostel at the edge of the car park where we parked - off the Main Street - is extremely well maintained, and the white shrub along its gable softens its appearance.

Within the Main Street we noted that a lot of the properties had too much signage and projecting lights/signs etc. An example is Bofey Quinn's premises. Another was the Centra property, which also had on-footpath signage. Such external signage and sandwich boards create an obstruction for pedestrians - and in particular for pedestrians with mobility issues. Another cluttered shop front and footpath was at the Daybreak premises. Hogan' Anglers Rest was very well presented, but once again projecting external lighting took from the overall effect. Down lighting should be discreet and flush with the shop front.

The Post Office was bright and very well maintained. The building to the side of Anne's Kitchen was under reconstruction on adjudication day. Well done on your work at the Blue Mackerel building and the house beside Enzo's with the green door. You purchased paint at a charity auction to paint the unoccupied building beside Enzo's. A local painter volunteered to paint the building beside the pharmacy. Thank you for the relevant 'before' and 'after' photographs.

The gable of the Market House Protected Structure at the entrance to the Main Street from the Gort direction needs painting. We noted the O'Brien 1870 plaque on this building. Many white-painted buildings between this and the bridge on the same side looked generally clean and fresh. Near the bridge we admired a very pretty white cottage with delightful raised bed shrub surroundings. Another small white single storey house slightly uphill on the opposite side also looked attractive.

P. Crowley is one of your Protected Structures and rightly so. It is great to see it in constant use.

Your bridge is a most important part of your built heritage. Whereas the hanging baskets on the bridge provide colour we do not anymore recommend the insertion of hanging baskets into such important parts of our architectural heritage, as they can damage the fabric of the structure. Moreover your bridge needs no embellishment. It is more than enough in itself. The garden of Richmond House provides a lovely backdrop to the bridge area.

You have approached the HSE in regard to the Health Centre. This is a very poor building in its disagreeable presentation. We think that you deserve better than this. We wonder if this building is in use. The surrounds are weedy and ugly.

It was disheartening to see the sad condition of the Workhouse which is also a Protected Structure. In these Famine commemoration years it is a pity that no project has been forthcoming in relation to this structure. It really is in a very sad way - with broken windows and ugly security fencing alongside. The modern sculpture associated with the adjacent residential area was not set off to full advantage, as the grass was a little too high around its base.

The GAA is a very fine premises. Perhaps the gate could be painted and the old security fencing along the boundary planted. Capping on the boundary wall at the Medical Centre needs repainting, as does one side wall.

You maintain street furniture.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

You maintain open spaces including that at Lough Inchiquin, the grotto, the area around St. Patrick's Hall and approach roads. Rural Social Scheme staff help you. The landscaped area around the old Church of Ireland/Heritage Centre is magnificent with its lovely mature trees and sense of spaciousness.

You have purchased local stone for use in flower bed surrounds. You provide baskets and planters at the two parish graveyards. Well done on your work at Kilvoydan cemetery. Did you liaise with the County Heritage Officer on carrying out the work at the well? The lovely simple landscaped grass approach to the cemetery sets off the stonework of the boundary walls and memorials to best effect.

We very much liked the simple grassed area at the Milltown Malbay junction and at the Ennis road approach generic village name sign. It is a pity that a big advertising hoarding here competes with the village sign and the planted boat.

We note your Tree Week tree planting and shrub planting under Residential also as it pertains to a housing estate.

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

You have improved access to Loughaun and the River. These areas were cleaned manually and no herbicide was used. You used removed branches to create areas for birds and insects. You are liaising with the National Parks and Wildlife Service to manage the area at Loughaun.

You have trimmed gently around the lake having regard to wildlife.

At the Inchiquin lakeside we noticed a gun club notice pinned to 2 adjacent trees. This is bad practice.

How do you see the Geopark trail helping you in your community focus on habitats? It certainly has huge potential. We hope that you consult the Heritage Office and the Biodiversity Officer of your local authority in relation to how to maximise your plans from a biodiversity point-of-view.

You should also read the Tidy Towns Handbook which is quite detailed on this category. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is also a useful resource. Engaging with the schools on even elementary nature study surveys can lead in time to the further analysis and interpretation/presentation of the findings. As you live in such a rich natural environment – and a very special one - you have the potential to enjoy it and learn more about it - as well as increasing your marks in this category very readily. We understand that Clare County Council has launched a biodiversity plan for the county. We suggest that you look into this plan and see how you can be part of the overall future of Clare's bio diversity.

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

The National School raised its second Green Flag in June 2013. Well done to the school! You have put a link on your website to advisory websites in relation to this category.

You segregated litter on litter picks. You have a bottle and clothing bank. You save paper by using e-mail and texting. You mulch grass. You have ceased purchasing Christmas trees and use an existing planted tree. You promote the free bus service to the Burren National Park Information Point. You have purchased two water butts. Christmas lights have been changed to LED. Preventing the creation of waste in the first case is the real objective. Have you considered conducting an audit - perhaps with the businesses to see where they can prevent waste? We recommend that you talk to the Environmental Awareness Officer in your local authority. You could increase your marks in this category as a community by taking on board some of the suggested projects in the leaflet distributed with the Entry Form in 2013. The Tidy Towns Handbook is also a good source of information in this regard.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Well done on your clearance at Shannon's Lane, Coach House Lane and Loughan Lane and Lake. The 'before' and 'after' photographs were appreciated.

You organised to remove signage from the old Chinese restaurant. Your takeaway and pharmacy have installed new shop fronts which you say has had a positive impact on tidiness.

You are lucky to have a County Council employee looking after your village on three days every week.

The clothes bank at the GAA grounds was well presented.

Green picnic seats and tables at the Inchiquin lakeside were very badly in need of a repaint. Some concrete post and wire fencing at the lakeside park area requires repairing.

A red and white seat on the green area opposite the Glebe estate would benefit from cleaning/repainting.

Whereas you have restored the derelict house at Kerry agribusiness yet the Kerry Co-op site would greatly benefit from screening/landscaping on its location at an important entrance to the village. In particular the area between the blue splay wall and the adjacent single storey grey building on the village side.

We noted two fly posts on a pole across from the Genealogical Centre. We noticed fly posting opposite the entrance to Lahtagoona. Fly posting was observed on a pole outside the Post Office, and on the Ennis Road side of the bridge.

A recessed grass area in the vicinity of the church has two boundary walls - one wall is a stone wall - the other is a block wall which is unplastered. Would it be possible to either face the block wall with stone or to plaster it?

At Riverston Bridge the wall around the corner to Rent an Irish cottage needs repair.

Well done to the National School for its litter pick in April. You have additional litter patrols during the village festivals. A litter pick took place in April. It would be a good idea to put a Litter Management Plan in place.

There were sporadic incidents of litter on the way down to Inchiquin lake and some more at the lake area, with an occasional paper in the Main Street, but these were not serious outbreaks of litter. Still we would prefer to see none!

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

You planted twelve native trees at Lahtagoona estate as part of National Tree week. We admired these trees. The estate is well presented. You also planted laurel hedging and dogwood here. The roads in this development have been resurfaced. This estate is well presented. There is no estate name sign facing the Lisdoonvarna approach. There is only a sign facing town-wards. A second sign or doubling/two facing of the first sign is required, so that traffic approaching from the Lisdoonvarna side can identify the estate.

Green areas are cut by private contractors, the RSS, and volunteers.

Well done to Creag Bhriain who came third in the best kept local authority estate competition this year. We admired the good mature trees along the town boundary side of the estate, but we considered the remainder of the stage to look quite bare and in need of planting -especially between the houses to the front and the Gort Road. The barrels at the entrance piers were worn and unnecessary.

Inchiquin Park residential area has a beautiful entrance area, good stone walls and excellent shrubbery.

At Riverston Bridge the sign for Rent an Irish cottage needs renewal.

Some really well presented houses were admired opposite the Corofin Hostel descending towards the grotto area. It must be very difficult to keep these properties as well as they are kept - given the constant traffic so close to their front elevation walls.

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

Traffic throughout the village was very dominant in the adjudicator's experience of our visit to Corofin. Various traffic snarls occurred on the Main Street during the visit. Perhaps you have an opinion on this. It is something that needs to be considered. Due to the narrowness of the Main Street and the continuous traffic flow, it was noted that quite a number of cars parked up on the footpath in various places. This is obstructive to footpath users and particularly to wheelchair and buggy users. It also looks very untidy. There are car parks available, and the adjudicator parked in one of these. There is no reason why these should not be used more regularly by all – including the local population.

On our visit there were three tractors and a white bus parked off-road on the wide pavement in front of houses with dormer windows across from the Glebe residential area (on the other side of the road.) These completely blocked any appreciation of the relevant three properties and looked extremely untidy and inappropriate at the entrance to the town and in the vicinity of the heritage centres. The adjudicator spent a number of hours in the village, and by evening these vehicles had been removed. We wonder if this is a regular - and if so it is damaging to the experience of the built environment of this area and looks very untidy. We also noted that pavement between these houses and the Catholic Church was badly cracked in places. Damaged pavement was also observed in other parts of the town due – no doubt - to on-footpath car parking.

Resurfacing has been going on all approach roads and it is hoped to complete resurfacing of the Main Street this year.

As already remarked upon three lanes have been cleared during the past winter. These are Shannon's Lane, Coach house Lane and the lane to Loughan.

You say that the County Council addressed the retaining wall in the library car park. We consider that the wall still needs planting. Perhaps this is a work in progress. The surfacing around the Library car park was very poor and a wall and boiler require repainting.

Your annual approach roads cleanup took place in April.

On the Gort approach there is a lovely rural feel to the approaches to the village at the 50 K pH speed limit. However, as one turns the corner in the road one notices the dirty black and white metal Corofin village sign on a grass bank. Further in towards the village there is the generic County Clare village sign. (Is there a need for more than one sign to announce the village?) This latter sign is set on a lovely grassed area. However there are bare patches in the grass at the edge of the stone edging. Moreover there is a very weedy access splay just in front of this grassed area. The field gate here together with field gates throughout the village and on all approach roads would look considerably better if they were painted in a uniform colour. This would give a tidy unified effect to the geographical area of Corofin. There were weeds around the edging of the grassed area. The generic sign also needs cleaning. And beyond this was an area where chemical weeding appeared to have taken place by the roadside, and the resultant burnt vegetation had not been removed. The environs improved as one reached the village's outer edge close to the stone wall access with mature trees on the right-hand side.

On the Lisdoonvarna approach vegetation partially covered the 50 K pH speed limit sign on the right-hand side. We admired the red pump and the seat at the Burren Way sign. A good gravel bed and shrubbery beside the stone wall and footpath leading into the village looked very well. Could the garage type property on the opposite side of the road be repainted before next year?

On the lake road approach some setbacks require surfacing. We admired the beautiful recessed entrance with old stone gate pillars. The capping on the pillars needs securing and the gates need - they are rusting. We observed weeds along the footpath on the lake side of this entrance.

You now have a Burren Geopark Heritage trail signposting and various map displays.

You say that road signage has been upgraded in this year, but you can see that we have issues with this claim. The back of the road sign on the town side of the grotto needs cleaning and the yellow and black road kerbing at the grotto required repainting. There was a 'headless' road sign pole at the entrance to the Glebe estate. Such empty poles should have their proper signage restored or the polls should be removed. The signpost to the Library (at the entrance to the Library) needs renewal. A litter free sign close to the Glebe estate entrance was bent. There was a very dirty County Council 'no dumping' sign on the Gort approach approaching St. Patrick's Hall. The black and white metal Corofin village sign on a grass bank on the Gort approach was dirty. The County Clare generic village sign was also in need of cleaning on the same approach.

A sewer vent pipe on the School Road would benefit from repainting
The footpaths and stone walls along the School Road looked very well, but there was one very poor field gate entrance (between two stone piers) which needed to be tidied. There were some weeds along the edge of the stone wall in places along this road.