

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Woodford - An Ghráig** Ref: **1165**
County: **Galway** Mark: **293**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	41	42
Streetscape & Public Places	60	38	39
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	34	35
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	31	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	15	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	35
TOTAL MARK	470	282	293

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Woodford – An Ghráig páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019

Congratulations on your Tidy Towns award 2018. As adjudicators we are very conscious of the high standard that is put in by so many groups each year. To win the Best Endeavour Award for County Galway highlights huge involvement, dedication and hard work

You have taken a very focused approach to the competition, breaking the tasks down into more manageable levels. Your map was clear with all of the projects listed, numbered, marked as New (N), Managed (M), Future Projects (FP). You enhanced this by colour coding these 3 categories and providing photos where relevant.

As a first-time visitor to the village of Woodford it is hard to believe that, as per your submission, only a few short years ago in 2015 Woodford village was in a very dilapidated state. The village that was visited was a bright vibrant village that must be full of many creative people, as reflected in some of your projects, such as drawing bird boxes where there were little holes in the walls.

You certainly are achieving one of your goals of creating a living vibrant community for all the people of Woodford. We hope we will be hearing next year of a successful branch of the Active Retirement Association in Woodford. Looking through the list of people and groups involved in your projects it is fantastic to see how far you have come. We noted that four new residents to the village are now active volunteers of your Tidy Towns group. It is a testament to all involved that you have created a welcoming atmosphere combined with an effective hub to harness everyone's strengths. Your Woodford Furnace Festival we are sure helped with this.

We certainly feel that your other goal of encouraging tourism footfall into the area to support business should follow. You are already noticing this through AirBnB reviews.

You mentioned that some documents required by Galway County Council seem particularly onerous on voluntary groups. We would encourage you to get in contact with groups of your size to see how to assist with this. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The PPN should be able to assist you here. You did highlight the good relationships with members of GCC so they might be able to assist also.

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

Your project from 2018 of contacting each household and business owner is still providing a wonderful colourful streetscape. Your work on painting and renovating derelict buildings has certainly improved the appearance here too. The addition of local displays rather than just pictures gives a more vibrant feel. Some of the buildings were only noted as been derelict on a second glance. The "before" photo of Poitín Stil, allowed for a WOW comparison when viewed on day of adjudication.

Careys with its traditional writing and brightly painted stood out well, as did J Walsh. A.Moran provides a great first

impression when approaching from the Galway side. It would have been such a historical and aesthetic waste if P Canning & Son shopfront had been let fall into ruin. The sign in its window to "Shop Local, Love Local" can be a reminder to all of the benefits of supporting local businesses.

The footpaths are in good condition and weed free. The planter boxes do not hinder the flow here. While it is a bit further out we cannot fail to mention Woodford heritage centre as a wonderful public building.

One of your goals is to create a sense of place through colour, local craftsmanship, and enhancement of your local focal points and community facilities. The many projects that have been undertaken by your volunteers to create a colourful vista in your village; with the bird boxes, fairy doors, bicycles, murals, old wheels etc. leaves a lasting impression on visitors. The murals must be given special mention as they really stand out. The "Village of the Iron Mills" is bright and colourful but more importantly its picture paints a thousand words of the history of your area.

We are aware when making recommendations through Tidy Towns reports, which some areas may be not be in your direct control. However the part you can play is to bring it to the notice of the relevant authorities. One of your examples here is the vent pipe report at the Garda station has been reported to the County Council

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Many rural villages in Ireland face the problem of how to create community spaces. You have a great number for a village of your size.

Your bridge walk area is beautiful. If we didn't have the map from your submission we may have missed your amazing picnic area. This must be your pride and joy. All those involved in this project should feel proud to be part of such a legacy. It is an amazing amenity to have in the centre of your town. More signage will hopefully encourage extra visitors to stop off and use this facility. Literally steps from the main street you are transported into a different world. A feast for the senses; from the sound of the river, the array of flowers, the old stone wall to the quirky display including a particularly eye-catching jeans display. The brightly coloured benches are inviting and are in very good condition.

While the planter boxes have their place it is great to see you have embraced the concept of removing raised planters and replaced with shrubs and perennial's straight into the ground. . Pollinator friendly perennials have the added benefit of generally being more cost effective. They have a potential life span of 10-12 years if properly maintained. Smaller amounts of annual replacement can supplement as well as complement plants already in place You mention that the GAA club is very supporting of your Tidy Towns campaign. Their own well-kept space reflects this. As it occupies such a prominent location in your village this is particularly important.

Your Playground has great equipment to suit the very youngest to the more mature residents of the village due to the outdoor equipment. It must provide a great social meeting place for your area.

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

Considering your locations it is not surprising that you are more aware than most of "our duty to protect the landscapes native flora and fauna". You told us that you plan is to "continue to look at our village through the lens of creating a landscape that encourage our pollinators to survive and thrive ". This highlights your interest in preserving and protecting your fragile ecosystem and habitats in your own area, thus hopefully making a difference. You are embracing the biodiversity pollinator plan as a central planning part of your planning. Well done on your work so far in this area including; providing education to community, extra pollinator flowers for food and shelter areas . Your identification of your hedgerows and stone walls as providing a wonderful natural habitat for so much of the nature around you is to be commended. Sometimes doing nothing, or less, is the best option such as you mowing the grass less.

All of these projects big and small should have a great effect on your pollinator population. You could check out a new pollination monitoring scheme has been launched by the AIPP called Flower-Insect Timed Counts (FIT Counts) whose aim is to measure insect visitation rates to flowers. It involves individuals/groups watching a 50x50cm patch of flowers for 10 minutes (April – Sept) and counting how many insects. Visit <https://pollinators.ie/record-pollinators/fit-count/>

Maybe you would consider entering All Ireland Pollinator Plan -Local Authority Pollinator Awards special award for Tidy Towns next year?

We note your successful work in lobbying to maintain existing walkway and create new loops at the nearby Derrycrag Nature Reserve. While providing a potentially excellent recreational facility, this conservation project should have great environmental benefits. We tried part of this trail and found it an area worth another visit.

With your wonderful water area "The Bay", we were surprised not to see some information included here on the nature and biodiversity . Maybe some anglers could provide this next year?

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

You highlighted one of issues you had was is the lack of education around sustainability. You can find extra help on this category of the competition on <http://www.epa.ie/begreen/> and on the Tidy Towns website.

To gain extra marks in this category we are particularly interested in the results of projects. For example can the shop tell you approx. how many times people used their own cup for coffee? Some shops have tills that keep account of this.

A few bullet points from each of the local schools on what their annual main achievements are would be great to see. For example, how much water does Mercy College save as part of their water efficient cisterns? Equally how often (approximately) are your 3 water butts utilised?

We look forward to seeing your results from the talk by Mark Molloy of Galway County Council to create awareness to try to prevent contamination of the green bin. Maybe consider carrying out an audit of the bins before and after. Well done on your poster free zone for the elections. The poster area is a wonderful idea. Feel free to demonstrate how this helps with the reduction of posters. For example does it reduce the amount of leaflets going individually into households in your area. The addition of the South East Galway heritage brightly coloured poster we hope draws people to the area.

The Bring Banks area is well kept. Do you have any data on how much these are used or how often they are emptied? Don't forget the first thing we must do is rethink/refuse whether we need to use something, then reuse and only then recycle.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

You are to be congratulated for the many measures you take to ensure a tidy appearance for your village. Well done on segregating your litter.

Although on the day of adjudication there was no dog fouling spotted we can see from your submission that this continues to be a scourge in your village. Unfortunately you are not alone. You have the bright poster but more importantly giving out the message that this is socially unacceptable seems to be the only way to tackle this.

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

It is great to see that all three of the housing estates in your village have representative's on your Tidy Towns committee. Your "Adopt a Street" project is helping ensure some great areas. Your work in encouraging individual householders to maintain their own individual properties is paying dividends. Having all roads and streets identified for action with core leader at each location is showing in the overall result.

While the vast majority of your housing stock embrace the Tidy Towns ethos a special mention has to be given to the garden and house down from the Heritage Centre. It must have amazing views also.

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

The welcome signs are in good condition and supplemented by some nice planting. In general the approach roads are in good condition with the verges well cut back. Be careful on the approach road from Loughrea as some vegetation here is slightly starting to cover some signs.

The Rose Bed at the Pulper gives a good first impression on the outskirts of your village. Your dedication to the pollinator plan is evident to visitors arriving with your bright and colourful "Let it Grow" signs. The new trees also look well here. Take care that the straps are attended to as necessary.

Concluding Remarks:

On our visit, we saw that Woodford gives the impression of a well cherished village with the residents taking pride and care in its upkeep. Well done to all concerned.