

# Tidy Towns Competition 2019

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Geashill - Géisil** Ref: **754**  
County: **Offaly** Mark: **344**  
Category: **B** Date(s): **19/06/2019**  
**17/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	52	53
Streetscape & Public Places	60	44	44
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	45	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	42	43
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	23	24
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	51	57
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	36	37
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	39	39
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>470</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>344</b>

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Geashill – Géisil – páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019! It is pleasing to note that Geashill retains its place with considerable honour as the foremost town or village in Offaly in this competition. Arriving in the village from any of four directions it is at once obvious that this is a special place, maintained with pride by its residents and, as one subsequently discovers, with a great deal of intensive research and hard slog by the Tidy Towns Association, by the School, by the business community and by a number of voluntary organisations including Raheen GAA, the Wildlife & Gardening Club, the Playground Committee, the Church of Ireland Grounds Committee and the Parish Council. You give due acknowledgement to the County Heritage Officer, the Environmental Awareness Officer and the County Architect. The General Services Supervisor and his team are also thanked for their support; their combined advice must surely have helped enormously in your endeavours. The National School is clearly central to the effort and it is interesting to learn that you have a School Liaison Officer and that professionals in a number of disciplines from outside the region have been invited to advise and instruct pupils. Your 3-Year Plan, of which you are proceeding towards the third year, has almost all current projects ticked: do not be dismayed if there are overruns in 2020, this is par for the course. It is good to learn that you welcome new residents. Congratulations on winning the Regional Pollinator Award last year and also for becoming Ireland's Best Kept Village in 2018.

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

The village is a picturesque mix of traditional two-storey houses, cottages-ornés and just plain cottages. The central feature is a triangular green with mature trees and decorative planting. The dominant building is St Mary's church-of-Ireland with its landmark square tower, pristine churchyard and decently preserved tomb sculpture; the gates had recently been painted. Hamilton's pub on its corner site is exceptionally well presented. Congratulations to the sculptor Ciarán Byrne for the memorial slab to Edward Egan and best wishes for your plan to create a feature based on the Geashill Caundron preserved in the National Museum. The Gala shop and filling station on the Tullamore road was spic and span, with decorative umbrellas for those taking a snack in fine weather. The telephone box was favourably noted: clearly items such as this are becoming 'heritage'; the book exchange initiative is an imaginative new use. The school, with its original Gothic building and extensive modern block, is brightly presented. Street furniture and public lighting standards are of high quality.

### Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

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

Here again the first-class interpretative signs must be acknowledged, among them the Heritage Trail. Thank you for your listing of activities such as visits to view projects elsewhere, local workshops, talks given by experts in the field, as well as the annual Garden Bird Survey undertaken with Birdwatch Ireland: without these we would otherwise be unaware of the strides you are making under this heading. Your planting of 900 young trees must surely be a record for any community. It was interesting to see how you managed to fit saplings into the densely established Glebe Walk. It will be interesting to see if a pine marten takes up residence in the accommodation created here. Log habitats were noted. Thank you for pointing out the locations of swift boxes. This adjudicator was interested to see the small plot dedicated to nettle-nurture: apart from their recognised job of attracting butterflies and other insects it is not well known that they make delicious and nutritious vegetable dishes (when cooked!). Congratulations to those who organise the Butterfly Monitoring Scheme: it is truly wonderful to learn that in five years the species noted has risen from five to eighteen. The school's entry for the SuperValu School Award 'Biodiversity starts with a Bee' was admired. Well done to all those who worked on it; it will be judged by a separate panel representing the Region; furthermore, as a permanent visual token of the school's comprehensive involvement in biodiversity, the bee mural created from 3,000 bottle tops must be described as exemplary – as well as being a formidable work of art. News of the development of your second bee monitoring scheme, with monthly records kept during the summer on a 2km path, will be eagerly looked forward to.

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

Perhaps the bottle-tops mosaic should be included here; however, the categories do naturally overlap. Projects such as anti-plastic drives, the creation of home-grown compost, clothes collections, rainwater harvesting, all show an understanding of this fairly recently introduced category which, along with the biodiversity category above, will become more and more important. Your mark here is the highest in the county. You do not appear to mention green flags, how many your school has achieved and for what activities; green flag attainments may be taken as a barometer of understanding the nature of sustainability and waste resource management. The bring bank, with its concealing trellis and climbers (what are they?), was favourably noted.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Geashill was remarkably litter-free on adjudication day thanks to a number of initiatives. It is a revelation, though not a surprising one, to learn from your survey that most of the disposable street litter is dropped from passing traffic – hence your people are at pains to pick it up. Well done for that! Also not surprising is the fact that residents are so village-proud that they remove any litter from their frontages as soon as it is seen. The 'walk and pick' idea is new to this adjudicator and could well be emulated elsewhere; so is the idea of the 'family clean-up day'. You mention that since the burying of electric cables you have increased the cleaning of bollards, signage and other street furnishings. The painting of several fine iron gates, following a scrape to determine the original colour, is something rarely seen and certainly the decorative metalwork throughout the village is a pleasing sight. Kerbside weed was not in evidence. Dereliction was apparent in only one spot and vacancy is not immediately discernible though it is odd that there can be unoccupied homes at a time of housing crisis. Congratulations to an unnamed member of the Junior Tidy Towns on the repainting of signs. Thank you for drawing attention to the removal of knotweed and snowberry. This adjudicator believes that the village has been somewhat under-marked under this heading in the past; the unusual increase is due to comparing this entry with successful villages of the same size elsewhere.

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

The street-side homes, their design and maintenance, whether from the 19th century or of more recent construction, contribute enormously to the visual allure of Geashill. There is a very strong sense of community pride. It is notable how many dwellings have attractive front gardens. Some individual houses, such as that with red-painted doorway and fenestration on the Ballinagar road and the thatched cottage on the Mountmellick road, to name but two, caught the attention. St Oliver's estate is well looked after; a very few boundary walls could do with freshening up with paint before next year; the high beech hedging here is a distinct asset. Ard Riadha is very well presented indeed, with one of the most spectacular swathes of wildflowers seen anywhere in the county; in contrast there is also some admirable formal planting. The planned estate that never happened has been successfully turned into a natural meadow.

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

Surfacing and road markings on the R20 are excellent. Coming from Tullamore the cycle and walking track on the left is welcome and as well as this the planting – including red hot pokers! – is a bonus. The Heremon & Heber public art commission is seen to be almost completed. It was noted that verges are now trimmed to a meter or so in depth leaving unmown grass and herbs as a refuge for whatever species desire to live there, and for the benefit of wildflowers. The 900 young trees should certainly create 'a windbreak, reduce traffic noise and be aesthetically pleasing' – a modest understatement. Do take the advice of last year's adjudicator in the staking and tying of newly

introduced trees. The recent wildflower mix in the neighbourhood of the picnic area will come into its own next year. The castle wall was seen to have been extensively repaired along the roadside.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

The all too short visit to Geashill prompts a return to savour the qualities of the village at leisure. Congratulations to the residents, and especially to the school children, on the extent of their dedication to the practical and highly principled enhancement of their home place.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

Congratulations on a very comprehensive entry. Your clear village map, artistically interpreted on the Heritage Information Board at the Village Green, is a very successful illustration of the important historical and architectural features of your village. I was delighted to get the opportunity to visit your lovely village again and I congratulate the committee and community volunteers on the great effort you have put into maintaining and improving your place. The Green, with his Giant Redwood centrepiece, surrounded on one side by a number of traditional residences and their spectacular cottage garden displays, looks particularly charming. Opposite, Hamilton's corner pub, with its red-coloured highlights, is a vibrant illustration of the commercial activity remaining in the village core. Nearby the Gala premises was brightly presented. It can only be hoped that rural Post Offices will reopen in time and that new government policies for the regeneration of rural settlements will include incentives and objectives for the long-term sustainability of these important community facilities. The village is rich in architectural character particularly in relation to scale, materials, proportion and detail. The conservation of this element of your inheritance is very important and it was a little disappointing to note that inappropriate replacement of traditional windows occurred in a number of locations. Congratulations to your Green Flag School on the presentation of their school grounds. The myriad of initiatives undertaken by the pupils and teachers here is very impressive. At the forecourt, the colourful mural highlighting the Sensory, Wildflower, and Pollinator garden was admired. Residential areas continue the high standard of presentation apparent in the core, and a good number of imaginative garden presentations were admired in various locations. At St.Oliver's, the planting of fruit trees in the green area was innovative while the bilingual name sign looked very well. The educational theme employed and illustrated on a series of information plaques was a highlight of the visit to your charming village. The interesting pictorial storyboards at the Glebe Walk, Village Green and Picnic Area, all contribute to this educational and informative theme. I fully endorse the comments and report of this year's first round adjudicator and congratulate your committee on an all-round partnership and professional approach. Geashill's entry shows the huge commitment of the Tidy Towns Committee..