

Tidy Towns Competition 2016

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Tullamore** Ref: **727**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **315**
Category: **F** Date(s): **19/07/2016**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2015	Mark Awarded 2016
Community Involvement & Planning	60	49	49
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	44	45
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	30
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	18	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	47	46
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	39	41
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	40	41
TOTAL MARK	450	311	315

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Tullamore is most welcome to the 2016 Tidy Towns competition. Many thanks for your well presented application form with map (removable!) and additional information. You are very well established in the contest and enjoy widespread support and recognition in your town. This awareness raising element is not to be understated and as such must always be worked on. Your three-year plan is not really at the standard of what is expected at this level of the contest. Although it said three-year plan it only had one column for 2015/16. Many of the actions were not particularly specific (e.g. anti-graffiti projects), or simply maintaining existing programs e.g. (e.g. open-space maintenance). This shows a certain lack of ambition. The purpose of long-term planning is to achieve goals that may take many years or which are complex. Your plan had no vision or overarching statement as to your hopes for Tullamore. As a result you may not be achieving your potential. It should be noted this is not due to lack of enthusiasm or commitment – qualities which are evident in these pages. Do try to keep your application as succinct as possible and any projects which are in the planning phase or are simply aspirational should go into your plan. Tullamore has such a long pedigree in the contest and it's great to read how you feel this participation has been of benefit.

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

Tullamore has seen its ups and downs but significant new development for the town, either completed, underway or in the planning phase, suggest you are on an up cycle. It was hard to tell from the text whether the refurbishment of the hospital was planned or completed but is nevertheless a great investment. New school developments are votes of confidence in the future. Your work at the old constabulary barracks caught the eye – this should be a significant heritage feature of the town. Well done to Offaly county council for tackling shop fronts, some local authorities have grant schemes for enhancing shop fronts so that cheap or garish alternatives can be avoided. Your works to maintain appearances at derelict sites are commended. The council buildings are very well presented while some time was spent in the nearby Lloyds Town Park. This really is a superb amenity with well furnished footpaths, groves of trees and play areas – well used on the warm and sunny adjudicating day! The older council building on High Street was admired for the beautiful presentation of this period building. The bridge house hotel, such a prominent location in Tullamore a life, looked well on adjudication day with flags. A lot of parking on the footpath at its entrance creates a cluttered look while preventing access for those with mobility issues. The development of the old distillery building would indeed be a most welcome improvement. Along Main Street some attractive businesses were admired. At Jamie's restaurant very old wooden containers with tired shrubs should be removed. Cafe Q has an inviting outdoor seating area. The Polski Sklep should not be permitted to darken its facade with enormous pictures of ham and bread as it degrades the streetscape enormously. This deadening effect is also seen as Lidl, Polonz and Xtra-vision which, along with a giant sign for Millennium House has sucked the life out of this stretch. For good measure the street was also quite littered. The civic space here is unwelcoming due to extensive weeds,

litter and broken seating. It would not take much to radically enhance this area. Along Kilbride Street the Garda station looks well. The old Bridge House facade looks great and is a strong distinguishing characteristic for Tullamore. The bridge itself is a wonderful expression of greenery when so easily the presence of a waterway here could be ignored. Outdoor seating at Eddie Rocket's is a great for clawing back some of this civic space for people, nearly all of the square is devoted to car parking! There is no shortage of car parking space in Tullamore why not try to give a little bit more space to pedestrians? Do not let the old Post Office deteriorate as it is an important historical building. Mr Price had toned down considerably since our last visit – well done to them for acting in the common interest.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

It is hoped that your Entente Florale experience was a good one. The Offaly county council policy to allow green verges to grow is worthy, many flower rich verges were noted throughout the county and frequently these are the last refuges for bees and other species. Flower displays throughout the town were admired and add welcome splashes of colour. The wooden planter sponsored by the credit union looked especially well in contrast in with the abundant concrete here. While the flowers here are colourful in the long-term bigger annuals shrubs would work better, e.g. rosebushes or similar. You want to maximise the impact using minimum resources. The canal through the town is magnificent and is complemented with bridges old and new. New urban spaces on Clontarf Road and canal junction create a very good impression. Flowers at the base of trees is not recommended however as they compete with trees for water. Young trees especially have shallow roots and need a lot of water so may explain why this tree is looking worse for wear. The Entente Florale effect was visible on Columcille St. large containers with trees are good temporary measures but long-term what is needed is trees in the ground itself.

Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities / Fíadhúlra, Gnáthóga agus Taitneamhachtaí Nádurtha:

As you are aware Tullamore has a phenomenal wealth of natural amenities for a large town. As you point out also many of these areas are also within protected areas. The adjudicator is looking at how you use these special places to raise awareness of nature among local people. It is important that legal designations are more than just lines on maps but that they actually mean something to people and that they are treasured. This can be done through holding talks or walks. There are numerous organisations in your area with which you could arrange these. It's great that you are aware of the pollinator plan but the adjudicator really wants to see how you are implementing it in your own works. The schools clearly have an active programme of nature studies (at least the junior ones) but we need to see the whole community involved in this important topic.

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

What an achievement that all 16 of the schools in Tullamore are actively involved in the green flag program. This is excellent. Local businesses are also actively exploring ways to reduce energy usage. However at the level of the contest, and for a town of this size, a more sophisticated approach is called for. For example, how is the group raising awareness of energy usage in homes and businesses across the town (e.g. why not arrange a public meeting with SEAI?). Are you promoting rainwater harvesting or composting? It is important to note that holding a talk or workshop is not an end in itself but the beginning of a program that is seeking to change behaviours. Google the 'circular economy' to get some ideas of what we are trying to achieve here. For more helpful tips and case studies from other Tidy Towns entrants please take a look at <http://localprevention.ie/tidy-towns/>

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Many of your projects to address graffiti or screen ugly walls are probably best described under this heading. Well done for all your work in this regard this year. The big cleanup as part of the national spring clean is wonderful and your photos were admired. It is excellent that you are carrying out weekly cleanups and in tandem with other support agencies this level of attention is important. You are right to pursue the issue of overhead cables, this can take time but will be worth the wait. Some street signage may be in good condition but is old and worn looking (e.g. the yield sign on McCormick Street). Applegreen's car park had broken glass among other litter and very poorly maintained landscaping in places. The very large car park with large ad for Hugh Lynch's is an eyesore in every direction. While in the long term this will need infill development in the short-term weeds, empty poles, abandoned materials, graffiti and dereliction should be addressed. This is used for the Tullamore Dew visitor centre so surely creates a terrible impression for visitors. The canal-facing facade in contrast is delightful. The car park with bus coach park it should be added is a far more welcoming introduction. Elsewhere the post office box on Columcille St. needs to be painted. Barry Cowen's constituency office needs to repair its lettering. Over Bridge Stores a lot of old signage for HB, phone companies etc is very messy and should be removed. Although it's hassle to remove Christmas decorations this should be done as they look out of place for the rest of the year, e.g. at Dunnes Stores. Litter control overall was not bad but certain black spots prevail and need attention.

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

Your 'tidy Tullamore' initiative was admired and the photos of the various winners were admired. How would you encourage those areas which do not routinely enter to take part? There is a large stock of homes in the town and many estates were visited on adjudication day. At Charleville View lush greenery perfectly sets off the attractive and well-kept homes. Try to replace any trees which are dead. Altmore House apartments have an eye-catching design and are nicely accompanied by overhanging trees from the park.

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

The road network around Tullamore has improved markedly in recent years. Bypass roads are completed to a high standard while art installations have helped define the town's identity. On approach from the R421 your landscaping works were admired while the beautiful tree-lined road creates a very good impression. The large parking area behind Dunnes Stores is very clean and well landscaped. The river walkway to the rear of Main Street had all manner of litter including condoms and graffitied walls suggesting this amenity route is actually a no-go area. With appropriate maintenance and landscaping this could be an attractive area for families. Masses of litter were to be seen on the riverbank under the wooden boardwalk. The Portlaoise road has some really fine houses and accommodation offerings.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a delight to spend some time in Tullamore and admire the progress you are making. There is no doubt things are moving in a positive direction and you are wished every success with your plans.