

Tidy Towns Competition 2017

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Glounthaune** Ref: **130**
County: **Cork(South)** Mark: **295**
Category: **B** Date(s): **14/06/2017**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2016	Mark Awarded 2017
Community Involvement & Planning	60	43	44
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	36	38
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	38	40
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	33	35
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	16
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	57	58
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	32	33
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	30	31
TOTAL MARK	450	285	295

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

We are pleased to welcome Glounthaune to the 2017 tidy towns competition and we are grateful for your participation. We note from your application form that there are 8 members on your committee with an additional 12 - 16 volunteers helping out. Whilst this is a sufficient number carrying out your activities, we are mindful that Glounthaune is a growing town (with a population of 965, you are about to move into category C!) and perhaps you should consider going on a recruitment drive to attract new members? We are delighted to see that you attract such good support from a range of different sources including Cork County Council, South East Cork Area Development and Fas. It is pleasing to see that local businesses and shops are supportive of your efforts with Fitzpatrick's, Ballymaloe Relish, Fiona Twomey Solicitors, the Elm Tree, AIB Little Island, IPB insurance, Ryans Supervalu (Glanmire) and Cuddy O'Leary & Foley Accountants all providing you with sponsorship. We were interested to read that other voluntary community groups in Glounthaune get involved such as Mens Shed, the Community Association and Muintir na Tire. Why not ask these groups to 'adopt a project' and take responsibility for one of your tasks? We were surprised to see that no sports clubs are listed and we wondered if they had been approached by the committee? GAA, soccer and rugby clubs in parts of your county (and elsewhere) have proved to be valuable sources of members and volunteers for other tidy towns committees. You are commended on a very comprehensive communication strategy and perhaps some of these mediums can be used to entice new members? It is good to see that you have made contact with the school and that litter awareness art competitions have been run. However, more could be done. Schools have proved to be an excellent source of ideas and helpers in other towns and villages – particularly for projects under the wildlife and natural amenities and sustainable waste management categories. Why not ask schoolchildren for their project ideas and consider delegating small projects to them. They are normally more than willing to get involved as this work is helpful in achieving green flags for their schools. We are delighted to read that your participation in the competition has fostered pride in your local village and community and long may this continue. Thank you for your completed application form and map – both of which were comprehensive. The consistent numbering sequence between the map in the application form was very much appreciated as it was very clear. You are commended on your tidy towns action plan which is a good concise and clear document. The application could be further improved by careful editing – at 58 pages (and a further 2 for appendices) it has become noticeably long. It is recommended that no more than 2 – 3 pages should be devoted each category as a means of reducing the amount of material sent into the tidy towns unit. Double sided printing should also be used where possible.

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

Glounthaune is an attractive village with a slightly unusual settlement pattern. The village is composed of three discernible parts with the village centre (which accommodates the Community Hall, the Rising Tide pub and Park with playground) located adjacent to the sloblands. The Church, Church Centre and this shops (including the flower

shop and post office) are located nearby (on the opposite side of the railway track) while Fitzpatricks and O'Neills Pub located in a separate cluster nearest the railway station. It is notable that despite its somewhat dispersed layout and relatively extensive size, the village is clean and tidy throughout. There are many features of interest in Glounthaune. Its coastal location affords pleasant views of the sea while its many buildings of interest also caught our eye. Fitzpatricks Shop (and the adjoining traditional style dwelling) and the Great O'Neill Pub achieve a particularly high standard of presentation while the natural stone church and adjacent centre also looked very well. The Rising Tide Pub (complete with tables overlooking the sloblands) also impressed and we liked the reuse of the old school building as a community centre. The shops behind the Church are also attractively presented. It is clear from the application form that your committee have been very busy with projects under this category with seven significant projects undertaken for 2017. Well done on your role in getting the traffic calming measures provided at the Church junction and we are pleased to read that they have met with universal local approval. At the time of adjudication, work seemed to be continuing as the sign pole was awaiting its sign – we look forward to seeing this project completed in 2018. The provision of an outdoor gym is an excellent idea and no doubt this is also proving to be popular with locals. We admired the new village signs and you will be pleased to note that the gravel based landscaping beneath them looked very well during our visit. The speed bumps were observed and the human sundial project is considered to be a very innovative and original means of commemorating the 1916 rising. Congratulations also on the provision of 2 steeltch sheds for tidy towns equipment – it is clear that your committee mean business in the competition!

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

There are many high quality landscaping schemes to be seen in Glounthaune. The extensive beds that are located adjacent to the main road (alongside the railway track) are particularly impressive as they provide visual interest to an otherwise dull boundary. We loved the mature trees and planting along the verges of the road leading from the railway bridge down to the playground and Community Hall. High quality and well maintained beds are also on view in the car park adjacent to the community centre. A range of projects are presented for consideration under this category this year. The windowboxes and floral displays along the church car park and the railway bridge were admired, but given the number used (particularly along the railway bridge), we would like to know if harvested rainwater is used to water them? If not, it may be more practical to reduce the number of boxes over time. We are pleased to see that you have replanted the beech hedging along the L3004 that was damaged by the knotweed eradication – this is a commendable project as natural boundaries are generally more preferable than man-made ones (especially in rural locations). The new planting and landscaping alongside the advertising hoarding looked well with its lovely colours and diversity of species. It is noted that some non-native varieties were used and it is recommended that these should best be kept to a minimum or preferably avoided altogether in your future landscaping schemes. Well done on your continued maintenance of grass margins around the village as they looked very well during our visit. It is appreciated that this is a significant job in itself as the grassed areas are numerous and extensive. Your new 1916 Centenary garden is a lovely addition to your village and the plaque is a fitting commemoration of the Easter rising. We were particularly impressed with the planting at the base of the Godwit sculpture. Your choice of heathers is applauded as judging by the photograph you supplied, they provide wonderful colours in late winter/early spring.

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

It is obvious that a great deal of your time and resources have gone into your projects under this category in 2017. We admired your new bird trail sign that is located in Craigs Field and we wondered if the motivation for providing this feature came from the adjudicators comment in 2016? However it is a lovely piece of work and it is a most informative sign – well done also on reusing the concrete base vacated by the gym unit. It is noted that additional bird boxes were installed in Craigs Field and Cuddys Acre and we would encourage you to monitor their usage. If additional boxes are needed, consider using recycled materials (such as waste timber or parts of old pallets) to construct them. You are congratulated on the excellent work undertaken to the Harpers Island nature reserve project and we were delighted to hear that following agreement on insurance, this site will be open to the general public later on this year. Is it possible to monitor how many people are using this on a daily basis (e.g. a sign in book)? If so, this would help you to ascertain how effective the project has been in raising awareness of local biodiversity. Perhaps bird watch Ireland can provide some advice on this issue. We were very interested to read about the efforts of your committee in eradicating Japanese knotweed it is pleasing to hear that this exercise has reduced the amount of knotweed. Moreover, your approach (enabled by Cork County Council and SECAD) may provide a useful pilot for other local communities who would like to address this serious issue. Your efforts to rehabilitate the Ashbourne Pond by using straw bales to hinder algal growth make for interesting reading. However, you have not stated whether it's been successful or not. Is it too early to say? Please let us know in 2018. The wildflower planting programme is impressive and you will be pleased to know that both Cuddys acre and the village green bed looked well on adjudication day – this is commendable as wildflower patches can be tricky to get right! Well done on hosting 2 awareness raising events over the past year. The worldwide nature day parent and toddler nature trail event is an excellent idea and we are pleased to see that your biodiversity presentation with the Irish Peatland Conservation Council and Cork County Council was a success. Perhaps your next awareness event will be held in your new nature reserve. And finally, we would like to commend Gaelscoil Ui Drisceoil for planting 200 native Irish trees on their school grounds. This is a wise investment as the benefits of this project will be seen for years to come.

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

Thank you for providing us with details of your projects under this category for 2017. We note that you are currently involved in a range of initiatives such as your participation in the sustainable energy community. This sounds like a

very exciting programme and we would like to be kept up-to-date with your progress in this in 2018. It is pleasing to see that you are working closely with other groups to minimise waste. Well done to the scouts for collecting Christmas trees for approved disposal in January. We wondered if these trees are used to make compost or tree bark? Mens Shed are also commended on their refurbishment and upcycling of used garden tables and seats, while the second-hand book sales in the post office and garage (as fund raisers for the tidy towns) are good initiatives. Like the adjudicator in 2016, we wondered if the school is involved in any of your sustainable waste and resource management projects? It is important to remember that there have been many successful collaborations in projects under this category between schoolchildren and tidy towns committee elsewhere in your county. There is no mention of hosting waste minimisation and sustainable resource use awareness events in your application. Where any undertaken? Perhaps they could be combined with your wildlife and natural amenities events that take place on an annual basis.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The standard of litter control was excellent on adjudication day and this is an impressive achievement giving the extensive nature of your village and the high numbers of passing cars – it is clear that your daily litter patrols are paying off! The standard of tidiness is also very high with the vast majority of areas appearing clean and tidy and neatly swept. Weed control is clearly a priority for your committee as virtually none could be seen along roadsides and pathways. Some improvements remain possible. The bus stop sign on the bus shelter opposite the church is a very poor condition and is in need of attention. The playground sign needs to be cleaned and one or two of the half barrel planters at the Rising tide are in poor condition and a little untidy looking. We note from your application that you have also undertaken some projects under this category. We are pleased to see that you are making progress in the county litter challenge and we wish you well in this competition in the future. Well done on carrying out litter cleanups and coast watch cleanups as the benefits of this work could clearly be seen during adjudication. Would it be possible to involve local school children (perhaps transition year), youth groups, scouts or sports clubs in these events? They can be useful teambuilding exercises – particularly if prizes are made available (for the most bags filled, etc). Perhaps a local business would like to sponsor a prize? Well done on your continued work maintaining the verges and your new anti litter sign looked well during adjudication. We are interested to read about the litter display unit as it seems an innovative way of promoting an antilitter message – although we were surprised to note that it was completely empty during our visit.

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

The standard of presentation of individual houses and gardens in Glounthaune is generally very high and it is clear that householders take great pride in the appearance of their properties and by extension, their village. The terraced housing adjacent to the Rising Tide and the Community Hall are particularly impressive. Well done to all concerned. We note from your application form that you initiated a new estates \ localities competition in May and we look forward to hearing some of the results of this excellent initiative in 2018. The residential estates were in good condition during adjudication with the Highlands looking particularly well (we loved the diverse planting at the entrance) while Woodlands also impressed. It is pleasing to see that Gort Fada have maintained good standards of tidiness – particularly as construction is continuing in this estate.

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

We liked the improvements undertaken to the village name signs and the landscaping beds at their bases – both looked very well and there's no doubt that they helped to create a very positive first impression for the visitor. This positive impression is also reinforced by the litter and weed free roadsides and trimmed verges. However, we missed the village boundary and name on the road leading to the school – is it marked? It is noted that a number of other projects have been undertaken and they include; hedge trimming (during February), improved road markings in the village, stormwater drainage upgrades and planting wildflowers and beech hedging. All these improvements have contributed to the neat and tidy appearance of your lovely village.

Concluding Remarks:

Your performance in this years competition deserves the highest praise. It is quite hard to believe that so many good projects (all of which are completed to a high standard) has been undertaken by a relatively small committee and band of volunteers and you should be immensely proud of yourselves. You are clearly very motivated and focused on your objectives. You richly deserve the increase in marks that has been achieved this year but be aware that you are now reaching the higher levels of the competition where it becomes much harder to earn additional marks. Well done again and we look forward to returning in 2018.