

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Letterkenny** Ref: **704**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **330**
Category: **G** Date(s): **28/06/2018**
08/08/2018

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	48
Streetscape & Public Places	50	42	43
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	49	50
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	41	41
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	19	19
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	52	53
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	38
TOTAL MARK	450	326	330

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

Welcome Letterkenny Tidy Towns to the 2018 SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition, your entry is very much appreciated. Thank you for your entry form, 2 maps and enclosures – School Gardeners Entry Form, Cleaner Community Campaign, etc. However, the entry form makes it clear that “The form should be concise and should clearly reference new works undertaken”. Requiring the adjudicator to carry unnecessary weight is not a way to encourage the support of the adjudicator. We do appreciate that we are not the only recipients of your entry form. An executive summary for the adjudicator would be sufficient. Also, please ensure that all projects can be found on your maps. An example is number 28, New Educate Together School, Map Grid Ref. 11. There is no 11 on either of your 2 maps. There are other examples.

Your population places you in the Large Urban Centre G. Your committee of 19 active members is in line with your population and volunteers that number c. 50 also show the esteem in which your Tidy Towns Group is held by your community. You have monthly meetings and meetings with others as required. The list of agencies, bodies and businesses that give you support is extensive and also confirms your status within your community and further afield. Your channels of communication range from traditional print media to digital social media. Your engagement with your schools is close and to your mutual benefit. It is new to this category to ask you to single out new projects that required special effort and we thank you for the list supplied. With over 33 Tidy Towns competitions behind you, that puts you in the veteran’s category. In our 60th year we trust that you will compete for at least the same number of years into the future. You set out very well in your entry form the contribution to your community that the SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition makes.

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

Letterkenny was the National SuperValu Tidy Towns winner as recently as 2015. Would it rest on its laurels? This adjudicator went looking for new additions to Letterkenny that were to be found both in the centre of the town and also on its outskirts. The search was worth it. Starting at Upper Main Street this adjudicator admired the old Courthouse, an imposing building, and was reminded that there was now a new Courthouse. It was not far away, just up the High Street. It, too, is an imposing building, all shiny and new. Landscaping is at a very early stage. There will be 6 tier levels of planting, separate from the grass area. This tiered effect evokes thoughts of seating in Roman or Greek amphitheatres with the senators in debate. The new Courthouse and its environs make a strong statement. A new café is close to it – The Honey Pot, which was making full use of outdoor tables in the sunny weather. Letterkenny Amateur Boxing Club 1972 is also a next door neighbour of the new Courthouse. It is tightly locked up. The Boxing Club, that is. While in the area the Garda Station, museum and government offices were visited. All looked well with the government offices standing out. Another modern design. One of your new seats was seen in the Tadgh Culbert car park, next to the government offices. Searching further afield Pramerica is new

and very well presented. A very modern design, it will enhance Letterkenny. Its grounds include a pond with tables and chairs beside it, large areas of neat grass and a good start made with the rest of the landscaping. This adjudicator looks forward to seeing it again in a few years. In the same area is Educate Together National School. As it should be, it is a new, modern school. The building is well presented. Already it has a Green Flag, and 1 Active School flag flying. The grounds are being well managed with plenty of grass and young staked trees.

Back to Upper Main Street, the Quiet Moments Tea Room stands out. It is well-painted and also has the best growth in its window boxes. Umbrellas shade the outdoor tables. McGettigan's Hotel is in a key location. On a pole with lots of signs, one points to the "Ecclesiastical Quarter". Does it mean "Cathedral Quarter"? After all that the Cathedral Quarter has done to promote itself. Dillon's Hotel enhances the street. As ever, Market Square looks well. Seats and litter bins are clean. The Brewery Bar stands out. On Main Street, opposite Market Square, are 2 new Letterkenny Tidy Towns seats. A number of Letterkenny Tidy Towns large, well filled wooden planters grace the footpaths. The library looks smart with 3 flower beds and a Tourist Information display board. Church Lane has an eye-catching mosaic mural of the Cathedral Quarter, designed by Mary Faughnan. The Cathedral Quarter has its HQ on Church Lane. It is well painted and has a contact number. Disused houses here are well camouflaged (the Tidy Towns Handbook gives advice on this) and one includes a painted window with "Letterkenny Tidy Towns open 24 hours". The Cathedral and the Church of Ireland are imposing buildings. The Church of Ireland graveyard has an inventory of all who are buried there. The graveyard is spotless. All of the ironwork of the church and the graveyard has been newly painted.

Trinity Hall 1841 – 1901 is well preserved. The tall elegant street lights display not hanging baskets but large flower containers. The flower containers on the footpaths and beside the High Cross are larger, displaying sumptuous amounts of flowers. Black bollards, seats and railings are newly painted. This generosity does not end with the Cathedral Quarter but continues on up the hill to St. Eunan's College. It is screened by majestic trees. Scoil Mhuire gan Smál N.S. looks very well. Flower containers add colour to the entrance. The grounds are well kept. Shelters in the school yard have colourful murals and 1 green flag flying. This report is constrained by its size. All parts of Letterkenny were visited. Commercial areas along Port Road, Pearse Road, Neil T. Blaney Road, etc. have commercial dimensions to their streetscapes that are beyond the scope of this short report and the time available.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

A visit to Letterkenny has to include roundabouts, those with interesting features and those without. Station Roundabout has its name on a black and white sign. Its sponsor, Letterkenny Shopping Centre, has its name on a discrete blue sign. The roundabout has an outer ring of grass and flowerbeds, the centre has trees and shrubs. There is no visibility across the roundabout. The Pole Star Roundabout has well-kept grass, small trees and shrubs. It has a fine art piece. Sponsor is Donegal Dental Clinic and its sign is the same size as the name sign. This junction also has islands with flower containers and a large advertisement for Earagail Arts Festival on a flower bed.

The Dry Arch Roundabout has plain, well-kept grass with an elevated dry arch as its centre piece. There is no visibility across the roundabout. It has its name sign in black and white. Its sponsor is Orbit Security which is larger than the name sign. This junction also has traffic islands which have flower containers. There is an advertisement for Earagail Arts Festival. A very big inclined flowerbed with Failte on one side and Slán Abhaile on the other. It also has a large brown sign "Welcome to Letterkenny Ireland's Tidiest Town 2015". These are just 3 examples of your roundabouts. Some others have no planting on them other than grass, no sponsors etc. One wonders if there should be some harmony among them? A Letterkenny look?

The bridge makes its own statement with large, well filled flower containers on each parapet and also on the central island. No doubt about the welcome. The main street is very well flowered from Upper to Lower. Individual premises make their own contribution. The banks – AIB, B of I, and Ulster between them have window boxes and hanging baskets. Junctions on Pearse Road have permanent brick flowerbeds. Parks make their contribution, and Letterkenny Tidy Towns makes its contribution to them. The park for the former Letterkenny Tidy Towns Chairman Jim McCormick – the Urban Garden of 1 May 2015 has developed very well. The addition of the outdoor gym to the Bernard McGlinchey Town Park has further enhanced it. Eleven pieces of state-of-the-art fitness equipment is commended. All placed on a soft surface to minimise injury.

The once forgotten Famine Graveyard is well maintained. The grotto has added flowers and more were brought to it by a Romany family while the adjudicator was examining the modern name plates for trees there – oak, sycamore, elm, birch etc. Bird boxes also noted. In addition to the Jim McCormick Urban Garden, the young trees planted on the Neil T. Blaney Road were noted. Ballymacool Park is very well managed, as is Ballyboe Park. The Parks Department of Donegal County Council are commended highly for their commitment and management of their parks.

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

Letterkenny Tidy Towns is commended for implementing objectives 1 and 2 of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan 2015 – 2020. We look forward to seeing more objectives being implemented during the remainder of this very important plan. We note that the Plots for Pollinators 2018 competition has started and we await its outcome in due course. The Famine Graveyard has been dealt with in a previous category. Noted that the Wildlife Friendly Garden Competition has started. We wish you success in updating your Wildlife Survey. Please include the outcome of the Schools Garden of the Year 2018 Competition in next year's entry form. All involved in the Tree Week are commended. We also look forward to the outcome of the Habitat Survey. Schools make ideal partners for projects in this category. The entry form stresses that projects score points. To progress in the Supervalu Tidy Towns

Competition a Tidy Town group needs projects in every category.

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

Last year's adjudicator drew attention to the waste hierarchy, starting with Prevent. This adjudicator will take the opportunity to gently remind Letterkenny Tidy Towns of this hierarchy again. Marks in this category increased from 20 marks to 50 marks in recognition of the time and effort put into it by Tidy Towns groups. This category has evolved in keeping with current waste prevention policy and best practice guidelines. These guidelines are based on the revised Tidy Towns Handbook guidelines distributed to Tidy Town groups in 2013. Subsequently an update was published "Sustainable Waste and Resource Management Document".

This category is about waste prevention. Once Tidy Towns groups have prevented waste as much as possible, they should look to "Reuse", "Recycle". In summary, "Rethink", "Reduce", "Reuse", "Recycle". As set out above, and as last year's adjudicator reminded you, the priority now in this category is prevention, then comes reuse, recycling etc. It is EU motivated. Tidy Towns groups are now expected to give leadership to their community by promoting the principles of waste prevention/elimination. Use your channels of communication. Your entry form tells us in project 65 Supporting and Promoting Programmes that you "work to raise awareness of" and you give a list of programmes. Are these in line with the EU policy set out in the Tidy Towns Handbook guidelines 2013 and subsequent update? If not, you must show leadership and tell them of the new priority – Prevent. Composting can continue. So can using brown bins, sustainable travel, Trash 'n' Fashion, charity shops, walks etc. Your "Waste Not in 2018" mentions waste minimisation strategy. This should be waste prevention. Others also use the words "minimise waste". That needs to change. Your promotional material needs to be reviewed. Recycling banks, allotments, community gardens should continue. Page 63 of your entry form Waste Management needs to be updated. As was said in your entry form in another category "Much is done. More to do".

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

An Taisce's Spring Clean is regarded in many parts as the start of Tidy Towns season. Well done to all who took part. We are particularly interested in the output. In next year's entry form please include information such as the number of bags of rubbish collected. We like to compare year-on-year figures to see if the problem is increasing/decreasing. Including measurements of the clean-ups, litter picks etc. is essential. "A Clean Sweep" was a good initiative. Many local authorities operate Tidy Estates Competitions. It is a good initiative and should be supported. Dog fouling was not a major issue on adjudication day. This adjudicator has seen these transfers being applied to footpaths this summer.

Across the road from the Jim McCormick Urban Garden there is a stencil on a litter bin "Clean it up! Any bag Any bin". That slogan is also used on the footpath. Workers in high-viz vests were seen litter picking. Well done to all involved. No litter black spots were seen on adjudication day, only the usual cigarette butts, occasional bottles, etc. The hot sunny weather resulted in the increase in bottles in parks, estates, etc. Clearly it is not a permanent feature. This adjudicator stood on fresh chewing gum near the High Cross in the Cathedral Quarter. The issue of unauthorised signage is handled differently by other local authorities. Some simply send out a lorry which collects all signage on roadside verges and removes them to one of their yards where the owners can collect them. Can this be implemented by Donegal County Council? Community clean-ups are a good initiative.

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

The Cleaner Community Campaign, now in its 33rd year, should be in the Tidiness and Litter Control Category. The Tidy Estates Competition was mentioned also in your Tidiness and Litter Control category. Estate planting will be adjudicated in the Tidy Estates Competition by the local authority. Letterkenny has a wide range of residential areas. That range was partly covered in last years adjudicators report and in the second round adjudication. This adjudicator also visited the same residential areas and saw teams and individuals hard at work to ensure that their estate, or individual house, would look at its best on adjudication day, be it Tidy Towns or the local authority's Tidy Estates Competition. It would be invidious if Tidy Towns selected one estate and Donegal County Council selected another. Efforts were being made in all parts of the town. We wish all the contestants our best in the Tidy Estates Competition.

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

Letterkenny has quite a number of approach roads, both national and local. During the course of this adjudication all of the national and some of the local roads were experienced. All of the national roads are in good condition. Many have 'Failte, Welcome' signs, reminders to visitors that Letterkenny was National Tidy Towns winner in 2015 signs, etc. These are located strategically at entry points and at some roundabouts, and have been mentioned in an earlier category. Floral displays are placed at access points and on the relevant roads and bridge. Letterkenny Tidy Towns and Donegal County Council are commended for their tireless work each year in displaying Letterkenny so well, particularly on approach roads. Floral displays provide a vibrancy that a sign or advertising hoarding cannot match. Letterkenny is still growing and examples of this growth have been noted earlier in this report. It is appropriate in this category to mention the Kiltroy Roundabout, which replaced a T-Junction, as an example of how the road structure is constantly being improved.

Concluding Remarks:

It was a pleasure to adjudicate Letterkenny. The town looked splendid and has a good buzz about it. There is great community spirit.

Second Round Adjudication:

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Letterkenny (Leitir Ceanainn) chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. Thank you for your detailed entry form and supporting material.

It was a pleasure being asked to visit Letterkenny to adjudicate for the 2018 SuperValu TidyTowns competition. Letterkenny is a busy, bustling town which is always alive and on our visits in connection with this competition it was no different. The town had lots of tourists strolling along the streets while locals gently jostled past as they went about their business.

The roundabouts with their dramatic centre pieces and entrance routes with neatly trimmed grass margins, trees and floral displays greet the visitor and are a credit to the Local Authority. You have a varied built environment with the new and old commercial areas linking together via a series of lanes and narrow streets. The many banners on the low-level lighting poles along the Neil T. Blaney Road advertise commercial units and perhaps you could suggest that these should instead be redesigned to show the name of the town and perhaps the town's logo as this would be less distracting and also more attractive. We loved the modern stainless-steel signposting which clearly indicate the various items of interest in the town.

The town is a delight of architectural styles which have developed over the years. There are some fine shopfronts in the centre of the town and those which have been replaced have kept historic detailing in keeping with the architectural character of the building. We note that 'Traditional Shop Front and Signage Guidance' has now been drafted by Donegal Co Co and we look forward to more replacement shopfronts adhering to these guidelines in the coming years. We were also delighted to see that most shop owners have resisted the temptation to install window stickers /graphics onto their shop windows. These require planning permission and we hope that those who have undertaken this will be pursued to have them removed. Shop window displays are vital to maintain an active streetscape.

The Market Square 'The social assembly and economic centre of the town' looked splendid and the new colourful seats are a bit of fun. We admired the sculpture of 'The Hiring Fair' with the quotation from 'Hard Road to the Klondike'. We were confused about the Famine Graveyard – is this a graveyard or a memorial garden? We loved the Butterfly Garden at the Tourist Office (which was closed on a Sunday!), and were very interested in the HedgeRow Survey which you undertook and which is proudly displayed close by. Having a Town Gardener and landscaping team is very special and your work with him is in relation to encouraging the planting of pollinator-friendly flowers and shrubs is excellent. This is something which must be embraced by the wider community and your example will hopefully be followed by others when they learn from you.

It was a pleasure to visit Letterkenny and take time to see the various projects. It is a town we know quite well having visited on many occasions. Your excellent additional information gave a detailed yet concise description of the various projects being undertaken in Letterkenny and you are involved in a great many of these which is to your credit. The booklet 'Letterkenny Tidy Towns, Caring for our Local Environment' was, as we said, excellent and beautifully presented and we recommend that you print out additional copies and leave them in waiting rooms in doctors' and dentists' surgeries, hair salons etc. so that the community as a whole can see the wonderful work being undertaken in their town. Well done on your hard work which is reaping deserved awards.

We agree with the marks awarded by the previous adjudicator.