

Tidy Towns Competition 2012

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonegal** Ref: **37**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **308**
Category: **B** Date(s): **16/06/2012**
01/08/2012

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2011	Mark Awarded 2012
Overall Development Approach	50	48	48
The Built Environment	50	39	39
Landscaping	50	42	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	33	35
Litter Control	50	40	40
Tidiness	30	19	19
Waste Minimisation	20	10	11
Residential Areas	40	31	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34	34
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	305	308

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Clonegal to the 2012 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your detailed submission including your innovative portable map pack, which was very well presented in terms of appearance and legibility of content. The range of annotated maps made finding areas of interest an easier task for the adjudicator.

The structured approach to your committee is certainly bearing fruit for you and for a committee of 15 people the role and responsibilities listed in your submission must keep you all very busy. The level of voluntary commitment is excellent and shows the amount of hard work and dedication needed to be successful in the competition. As a group you seem to have an ordered approach to gaining support from various agencies. Thank you for including a range of photographs with the submission including the before and after pictures of various projects. As a next step in your group's works have you considered gaining support to set up a Clonegal village website. Many centres have done this and find it a very useful tool to spread your message and as a way to communicate both with the local village and the wider community. A comments section could be included to give residents a forum to discuss issues relevant to the community and present new ideas for consideration.

The Built Environment:

The standards under this category were high with all the key components of what constitutes good practice under built environment being adhered to. The following are a few highlights that appealed to the adjudicator during a very pleasant visit to the town. The use of Irish text and traditional font on the Siopa Uí Dhuinn was lovely to see. The discreet frontage of the Sha-roé bistro was also admired and very appropriate to its setting. The stone frontage of the Clonegal General Stores is very attractive but the yellow signage here needs

attention, an issue you are currently hoping to address. Good luck with this. The works you have done as a committee in addressing the issue of vacant buildings is be applauded as is the proactive approach to addressing issues within your control such as the works done at the bridge house. The residents of Moyacomb Meadow are also to be congratulated on their commitment to address front garden areas of unoccupied houses within their estate with their adopt a vacant house scheme. An model of neighbourliness that will stand as an example for other centres facing similar issues.

Landscaping:

From your submission it is clear that this is a category where much thought and commitment has been put in by the committee. Be sure to think about the habitat value of planting and consider preparing a long term planting strategy for the village. Plan to plant some oak trees each year to create an enhanced landscape setting for the village and its approaches, and make true again the Irish meaning of your village as the river of the oak. There was a dead tree noted in the open space by the watch tower. If this is to be removed, replant with a native oak to act as a feature tree and a gateway feature for the village for future generations. It will mirror the feature oak sited at the centre bed at the other end of the village near the Wicklow way park. This long term structure planting may take a while to have an impact but you will be thanked by future generations for investing in trees. Keep this in mind when choosing species for your planned tree planting at the watch house village housing area this autumn. Make sure you have a maintenance programme in place to look after any trees recently planted. Get advice from your link with the botanic gardens expert to get a list of the best species to plant but concentrate on native species where possible or naturalised ones. Where you are planning ornamental planting, concentrate it at the village core. We felt that the riverside area perhaps was not the most appropriate place for the many annual planters, it detracted somewhat from the naturalistic setting. When considering large ornamental planted areas consider the use of herbaceous perennial plants which do not require annual planting; they provide a more interesting and subtle colour to an area and require less maintenance. Although you have been successful in growing your own annuals from seed they are still a labour intensive and resource hungry way of producing summer colour. "Herbaceous perennials," by contrast, survive the winter and will come back again next year, even if their above-ground growth dies back. The planting to the weavers cottage was a joy and well done to the tutor and all the students involved in this project.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Well done in all the survey work undertaken and included with the submission. This has surely helped you formulate plans to help improve biodiversity by intervention or management practices. For each of the habitat types listed on your map, riverside, woodland, old walls and those with private properties, compile a short and long term management strategy. Also do not forget the residents' garden areas as important habitats over which we have direct control. Encourage residents to plant species that are nectar rich and so have the village buzzing during the summer months. This can be done by building on the success of this year's schools poster competition on the subject of bees and butterflies. The invasive species are an issue for you especially given your riverside setting. Continue to follow best practice in addressing this issue and refer to the invasive species Ireland website for advice before addressing any affected habitats.

Litter Control:

Once again the standards of litter control in the town were very high with no obvious litter evident. Well done to all involved in maintaining the high standards. As part of your successful litter management, has a litter bin audit been carried out? Periodically examine how often bins are being filled and used. If some areas do not require bins they should be assessed. For example an old concrete bin at the Wicklow Way map park seems to have been transformed into a planter. If a bin was no longer required here it should have been removed altogether.

Tidiness:

The standard of tidiness in the town was once again very high and the works you have taken to address vacant sites is a great help in this regard. All directional and name signs were clean and visible as were the town information signs. Overall the standard seems to be on a par with last year. Well done to all.

Waste Minimisation:

Some excellent work is being done by the committee to promote the whole ethos and culture of waste management and minimisation. We were intrigued by the notion of a water harvesting machine and we wish you luck with harvesting water throughout the village for summer watering. Well done to your school for their success in the green school programme and in getting their third Green Flag. Have you considered getting residents involved in the green homes programme, also run by an Tasice? This allows residents to access the most current and up to date tips, advice and action plans on ways to prevent and reduce waste and energy use in the home, conserve water and find out about sustainable travel options.

Residential Areas:

In general residential areas in the village are presented to a very high standard and well done to all your residents for the efforts involved in presenting both individual homes and communal areas. The beautiful displays to the front gardens of the homes facing the main street on the Moyacomb estate were really charming. Considering the planting is beautiful but also practical, in preventing slope erosion, makes it all the more effective.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The standard of verges and approaches to the town were good with road signs clean and legible. One wondered if the sign advising of the new junction layout is still required. Ask Carlow County Council if it can be removed to reduce the visual clutter on the approach to the village. Hanging baskets should not be attached to street lights or ESB poles as they are a risk where adjacent to live wires. This can be very dangerous. Good luck with the progress in getting a path installed from the park to the dispensary and riverside area.

General Impression:

Clonegal seems to have really benefited from its involvement with the Tidy Towns competition. The professional and structured approach to the work being done is a credit to you all and contributes to the sense of community pride on the ground. Well done to all involved in this year's submission and we wish you continued success in 2013. Continue with your good work and we see no reason why your beautiful village should not go from strength to strength in the competition

Second Round Adjudication:

The village looked very well on second adjudication day, despite the inclement weather! Housing stock is a large contributor to the built environment of Clonegal. The relatively new houses along Main Street were attractively landscaped, and a cottage with magnificent window boxes was also admired in this vicinity. The new houses at Watch House village would benefit from some sensitive landscaping treatment. The existing landscaping throughout the village looked spectacular. The riverside area with its sheep and pig sculptures and carts looked very well and the chicken wire sheep sculpture at the crossroads at the top of the village is very attractive. The crossroads at Watch House village looked spectacular. The national school was quite fresh and St Bridget's church looked well. Some buildings opposite would benefit from upgrading and the tin roof to the shed at the bridge should be freshened up before next year's competition. In terms of commercial premises Sha Roe Bistro looked very well. The high level plastic signage to the hardware store could be removed as signage below seems sufficient? P.J Dunne's is an attractive traditional shopfront. The recycling area was well maintained, and its display of nasturtiums and sweet pea looked quite charming. Although approach roads were generally well maintained, weeds were evident at kerbside on the Carnew road on the day, which looked a little unfortunate. Daisies over-spilling a stone wall were admired on the Bunclody side of the village. Clonegal is a village that continues to impress- it is many years since this adjudicator first visited the village and saw what a charming place it is, with the potential to do extremely well in the competition. This has been realised and the proudly displayed awards for Ireland's Best Kept Town and Entente Florale also bear witness to this.