

Tidy Towns Competition 2018

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dromiskin** Ref: **492**
County: **Louth** Mark: **311**
Category: **C** Date(s): **22/06/2018**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2017	Mark Awarded 2018
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	50	51
Streetscape & Public Places	50	33	34
Green Spaces and Landscaping	50	38	40
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	34	35
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	23	25
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	61	63
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	26	27
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	36
TOTAL MARK	450	300	311

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Dromiskin Druim Ineasalainn chuig Comórtas na mBailte Slachtmhara SuperValu 2018 agus chuig Ceiliúradh 60 Bliain an Chomórtais. We are most impressed with the high level of organisation of your dedicated committee of 12 members. The community skills audit (whereby skills needed are matched to projects identified) appears to be an excellent mechanism to get projects completed. The response by over 30 residents demonstrates that the strength of community spirit in your small town is strong. We are delighted to read that your committee takes full advantage of all the supports on offer from Louth County Council, Tus, Solas, the Louth Leader Partnership, the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. We are pleased to see that local business support your effort and that you have a strong level of engagement with a range of voluntary groups and clubs like residents associations, the GAA and the Parish Council. These links are tremendously important and we urge you to maintain them in the years ahead. Your communication strategy is very comprehensive and you commended on developing your digital presence with a revamp of your website and for setting up a social media account. We note that you produce an annual newsletter and in the interests of cutting down on printed paper waste, it is recommended that you closely monitor the number of printed newsletters that are required. For example, a significant number of people may be happy to have an electronic copy by email. Reducing the number of printed newsletters will enable you to get closer to having a zero waste communication strategy. Your engagement with the school and the development of projects of mutual benefit is exemplary. We are particularly pleased to see that a junior tidy towns committee has been set up and that they select their own projects and complete them with your assistance. This is tremendously important as it fosters a sense of local ownership of the projects among young people at a local level and it encourages greater participation. It is heartening to read that through the work of your visionary committee and volunteers, the tidy towns competition has had such a transformative effect on your village by improving its appearance, enhancing its appeal to tourists and boosting economic activity. Thank you for your very detailed entry form and series of maps which are very useful during adjudication. Thank you for working hard to keep your application form as concise as possible. It is an excellent piece of work with a great mix of text, photos and diagrams. We particularly liked your five year plan summary that was set out in concise table format the attachments comprising the top tips for pollinators leaflet, the overall map and school map, the heritage trail map, the Christmas leftovers tips, waging war on waste information booklet, the waste survey, the guide to garbage and the house and garden competition awards ceremony booklet for 2017 were all noted.

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

This was the first time that the adjudicator had returned to Dromiskin following a ten year absence and the transformation of your village was observed with amazement! It is clear from our visit that your committee and community have been working exceptionally hard to improve your village and we are pleased to report that many

positive changes can be seen on the ground. Dromiskin looked particularly well during adjudication with the vast majority of buildings and the many open spaces and amenity areas presented to a high standard. Heritys Pub and the Garage both looked neat and tidy and it is clear that both property owners / occupiers take great pride in their appearance. St. Peters Church is a striking building which occupies a prominent position on Chapel Road while the adjoining National School is a charming structure. We note that extension works are proposed and we look forward to seeing these complete in the year ahead. The wonderful public art and heritage features such as the Souterrains and the Viking Ship were admired and they add further interest for the visitor. Just like the adjudicator in 2017, we were amazed to see the volume of projects that have been undertaken for this year's competition with no less than 14 listed in your application. The sporting heritage panel was in place (as scheduled) during adjudication and it looked particularly well. Well done also on the installation of railway heritage panel and enjoyed seeing the new heritage park name stone (made from local stone). Congratulations on your official unveiling of Heritage Park and it is a fine amenity that everyone can be proud of. We note your continuing engagement with Louth County Council in relation to different development sites in the village and we hope that positive outcomes can be achieved in each instance. You are commended on the painting of AOH (St Ronan's) Hall as it looked bright and fresh and for revamping the heritage mural at the graveyard. Your actions screening the St Ronan's Villas and providing heritage water colour panels on the McDonald's site are applauded as these are considered to be practical approaches to dealing with sites in need of development. The erection of new heritage banners, upgrading of the village map and maintaining heritage signage are also appreciated.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

We enjoyed seeing many high quality landscaping schemes in Dromiskin on adjudication day. The Heritage Park was a highlight of the visit with no less 6 new projects to be seen. We applaud the planting of 14 native Irish trees in the Heritage Park and you are commended on the diversity of species that you have chosen which include Birch, Scots Pine, Crabapple, Ornamental Hawthorn, Oak, Alder, Irish Yew, Mountain Ash, Holly, Rowan and Corkscrew Hazel. Well done also on sewing the new hawthorn hedge as native hedgerows make a significantly positive contribution to biodiversity. The planting of the living Christmas tree and spring bulbs is also commended and we are delighted to report that the new raised landscape beds looked exceptionally well. The new Celtic knot bed that was designed and planted by the junior tidy towns committee, is a lovely addition to this attractive central amenity. Highlights can also be found elsewhere in your attractive village. We enjoyed seeing the diverse planting at the AOH Hall while the colourful and attractive planting at Docking Street (in front of the Cemetery and Round Tower) provides a wonderful introduction to your village on the approach from the Whitehouse Road. It was observed that the kerbed beds at the church and school car park were upgraded. However, the beds in the car park on the boundary with Ginnetys Pond are more overgrown and we wondered if this is intentional (is a wilderness approach being followed here)? We very much enjoyed seeing the planting in the entrance beds to the village that are provided on all approach roads. We fully appreciate that the work of your tidy towns committee also includes a significant amount of maintenance work and your diligent efforts could clearly be seen during our visit. The Mediaeval Garden, Lawlors Peace Garden, the Dreamtime Garden (on the school grounds) and the Biblical Garden (at the school and parish grounds) were all maintained to a high standard.

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

An almost overwhelming 18 projects were undertaken for this category in 2018. In the view of the adjudicator, a good balance is achieved between practical biodiversity promotion \ conservation projects and awareness events. It is noted that a very good range of practical projects were undertaken. The provision of pollinator friendly beds at the Co-op field and the sowing of wildflower swathes in the credit union garden are excellent examples of actions that are designed to boost the bee population and we wondered if they are achieving their aims? The provision of bee, butterfly and ladybird boxes was noted with interest and we wondered if any counts had taken place? Could this be done by the school? You are also commended on your designation of pesticide free zones, the provision of wild and free landscapes, the launch of the incredible edible garden, the maintenance of the medicinal herb garden and engaging in biodiversity planting in the old school. These are all excellent projects but we encourage to now take stock and see if these amenities are delivering their expected benefits. No new parks or areas should be developed without first assessing the biodiversity contribution of your existing amenities. Could some wildlife survey work be done? This could be a suitable project to carry out in the outdoor classroom (seomra glas) on the school grounds. The viewing stand at Ginnetys pond could also prove useful. Don't forget to record the results as the survey could then be repeated at timely intervals to help you to monitor what is happening with biodiversity on an ongoing basis. We were interested to read of the awareness events which include presenting the junior pollinator plan, providing an information stand, installing a notice nature panel at Jack's Hill, promoting biodiversity information on Facebook, forming a partnership with the local farming community and producing a leaflet on pollinator friendly planting. Once again, these are all great actions for raising awareness and we wonder if it would be possible for you to monitor how effective they are. Have you been taking note of the numbers who attended the presentation? Also, how many farmers are in the partnership? Please let us know in 2019.

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

It is clear from the adjudicator's report in 2017 and the inclusion of a staggering 31 projects in your application form this year that your committee clearly understands the aims of this category which is to achieve waste minimisation and sustainable resource use. We were interested to read the many fine projects that have been undertaken for 2018 and there seems little doubt that they will help you to achieve your aims. We are pleased to see that many practical actions have been undertaken such as the installation of a composter and a wormery in the incredible edible garden, avoiding the use of paper at meetings, holding Cycle on Wednesdays and Walk on Wednesdays events and promoting reusable lunch boxes in the school, setting up the vertical veggie patch called the living

Larder, engaging in rainwater harvesting, reusing newspapers for animal bedding, using hubcaps for decorations, using salvaged wood to make an insect village, providing an outdoor library and a battery recycling unit and installing bicycle racks on the school grounds. We were pleased to note that a waste action plan has also been prepared with fresh actions identified. However, we recommend that in 2019, the committee (and perhaps the school) should take stock of the many actions that they've implemented up to this point. Don't forget that the ultimate aim of this category is to effect behaviour change within the committee and wider community by getting people to minimise waste and use resources sustainably. It is strongly recommended that you undertake a detailed survey of the wider community in Dromiskin to enable you to assess if significant numbers of people are changing their behaviour in response to your projects. For example, can you find out how many people are composting in their homes? How many people are using the outdoor library and the battery recycling unit? What percentage of children walking to school or cycling to school on a regular basis? This information will tell you if there is a growing trend in Dromiskin to more sustainable behaviour and just as importantly, if your actions are being effective. It should also help you to identify new actions that will help to achieve behaviour change.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The standard of litter control was generally good and aside from small isolated pieces of litter to be seen in the heritage garden and in the school grounds, Dromiskin was practically litter free. This is considered to be a very good performance and we are sure that it reflects the agreed approach set out in your litter management plan. We are most interested to read about your different projects under this category. You are commended on your cleanup events and it was obvious during adjudication that they are making a practical and positive difference. Well done on taking part in the coastal cleanup. We are pleased to report that your cigarette butt campaign is working well as no cigarette butt litter could be found anywhere during our visit. Noting the comments of the adjudicator in 2017 with respect to graffiti, we are aware that you have engaged in graffiti removal in a number of areas such as the Viking Boat and the Monastic Site at the entrance to Innis Linn. You will be delighted to hear that these areas looked great and no graffiti can be observed during adjudication. Your doggy ambassador scheme also seems to be successful as dog fouling was not evident. The standard of tidiness is generally high and your weed control program appears effective. However, a small number of improvements are possible. We were surprised to see a number of the litter bins looked a little untidy (particularly on Chapel Street) and they would benefit from a power wash. A headless sign pole was also spotted close to the Credit Union garden and a black and yellow road sign could be seen on the Commons Road approach. An untidy field gate could also be seen here. It is also recommended that greater care is taken when choosing where to deposit soil or gravel heaps. Gravel heaps can be found carelessly dumped on the wildlife area at the AOH hall. While, these heaps are expected during works, the use of some screens (preferably made from recycled material) to hide these from view should be considered. A similar approach should be explored for the entrance area to the heritage park.

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

A good standard of presentation could be seen in the residential areas of Dromiskin on adjudication day. Church View looked exceptionally well with its trimmed grass verges and colourful new landscaping beds. The new estate signage in Rath na Gloine looked well and the diverse landscaping at its base help to enhance this further. Well done to the committee for helping Seabrook to remove the cast concrete pipes from their amenity area and we wondered if any further improvements are proposed here? The house and garden competition is a great idea and we urge you to keep this going. We were most interested to hear about the initiatives in this category such as the 10 minute makeover work sessions and it is hoped that this simple but effective idea succeeds. We also read about the commencement of the estate management planning (the shared approach to maintaining residential areas to the highest standard possible) and we would appreciate further details on this project next year.

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

The provision of new hand-painted wooden welcome signs on the approach roads into Dromiskin is commended as they looked both distinctive and smart on adjudication day. The colourful landscaping used beneath the signs was also very effective in drawing attention to them. Well done also on maintaining weed free roadsides and trimming the approach road verges. We were delighted to read that your representations to the council have been successful and that a new footpath is being constructed along Commons Road. Be sure to remind the Council to place ducting in the footpath to facilitate the undergrounding of wires. This will make a very positive difference to everyone in Dromiskin and we look forward to seeing this completed in 2019. Your work maintaining the roads and footpaths in the village centre is acknowledged and we note that resurfacing is proposed for Chapel Road.

Concluding Remarks:

This is a most impressive performance by Dromiskin Tidy Towns and volunteers. We urge you to continue your excellent work as it is making a very positive difference to your village. Best of luck in 2019 and we urge you to take the recommendations contained in this report into account when preparing your work programme for the year ahead. Well done and keep up the good work!