

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Milltown** Ref: **202**
County: **Galway** Mark: **303**
Category: **B** Date(s): **18/06/2013**
31/07/2013

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	47	47
The Built Environment	50	37	38
Landscaping	50	39	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	34	35
Litter Control	50	41	41
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	14	15
Tidiness	30	18	18
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34	34
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	299	303

Overall Development Approach:

We are delighted to welcome Milltown to the 2013 TidyTowns Competition and to see the remarkable progress that your rapidly expanding central committee of 10 members is making to your lovely village. It is not surprising to read that you enjoy very productive links with Galway County Council, Galway Rural Development, the Fisheries Board and the OPW as good working relationships with statutory bodies and agencies are necessary to achieve progress in the competition. We are pleased to read that you have also adopted a community partnership approach to your projects by involving other voluntary agencies in your village, such as the Parish Council, Parish Clubs, the GAA and the Milltown Development Association. It is also great to see that your work is acknowledged and appreciated by local businesses and the wider community who provide you with assistance and support. Your communication strategy is clearly effective, but it relies on traditional means of communication such as parish newsletters, local newspapers and meetings. Have you considered setting up a website to publicise your projects and activities? This is not only an excellent (and waste minimising) way of contacting people, but it can also be used to raise awareness of issues such as biodiversity and waste minimization and it can be very effective at capturing feedback on your completed projects as well as suggestions for new ones. We are delighted to read that you have a close involvement with the school and that a number of joint projects have been undertaken. Thank you for your comprehensive entry documentation which was a great help during adjudication. Your five year plan was read with interest and while the table was most informative, some consideration should be given to including a column in it which identifies strategic partners for each project. Strategic partners can be statutory organisations such as Galway County Council or voluntary bodies.

The Built Environment:

Milltown is a most attractive village with a range of interesting elements in its built and natural heritage. There are many attractive and very well presented buildings which include Sheridans Public House, with its traditional design as well as Ryans, Finns and Mullarkeys - which was a blaze of colour with its planted window boxes. The traditional shopfront of Burkes was also admired, while the unusual design of the Church also creates interest and a welcome contrast to the more traditional building styles. Glynn's Hardware (and the beige and blue building opposite) also looked well, while the modern mixed development of Mill Brook generally achieved a good standard of presentation. The appearance of the School and the Garda Station was excellent, while the Committee is commended on their great work to the CYMS which looked fresh in its new coat of paint and colourful planters at the entrance. The pump is also a nice feature in the centre of the village, and the lovely

natural stone bridge was admired. The Committee is to be commended on their imaginative approach to vacant buildings as the landscaping and painted windows of the buildings beside the Church and opposite the Hardware looked presentable and did not detract from the appearance of the village. The natural heritage elements of Milltown have also been emphasized by some of the excellent projects undertaken by the Committee such as the river walk and the natural heritage park while the entrance to the Dawros/Russelstown Walk opposite the CYMS is a most attractive amenity and the famine memorial that is maintained to an exceptionally high standard. We were also pleased to see that O'Grady House has been upgraded, the Health Centre Building has been revamped, a new gym has been provided at the GAA park and the memorial seat to your colleague, Frank Mullarkey, is a lovely piece of work.

Landscaping:

The Committee seems to have been very busy with landscaping projects in 2013 as a number of very attractive planting schemes were observed on adjudication day. The natural stone bed with the colourful landscaping at the bi-lingual welcome sign on the approach road from Sligo looked very well and this gives a nice first impression of your village. The landscaping and tree planting at the entrance to Millbrook from the Dunmore Road in its carefully maintained grass verge was admired, while the colourful landscaped bed close to the car park entrance also caught the adjudicator's eye. The planted boxes around the pump serve to enhance and draw attention to this attractive feature and the planters that were built into the natural stone white washed walls at the bridge are quite original and looked lovely. The landscaped strips at the entrance to the Church were a highlight for the adjudicator in addition to the excellent planting to be seen along the very well maintained entrance road to the Dawros/Russelstown Walk. In addition to the above schemes, the immaculately maintained grounds of the Church were admired while the many window boxes to be found lining the village added lovely summer colour. The Committee is also highly commended on their excellent work to the heritage park and the river walk. It is noted from your entry form that the flower bed at the Council offices was repaired, new tubs and planters were provided in addition to new tree planting at Cloondroon Lake and infill beech and thorn hedging took place on the Dawros Road and the Tuam Road. We were also pleased to see that the advice of the adjudicator in 2012 to avoid planting at the base of trees has been followed.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

This is considered to be a strong category for your tidy town groups with a range of very high quality projects presented in 2013. The river walk is an excellent project that can be enjoyed by locals and visitors alike with some lovely amenities including the heritage park. The linkages between the Sli na Slainte and the river walk are quite excellent as it now traverses a range of rich habitats (i.e. riparian and bog) as well as taking in key heritage buildings and features of Milltown, such as Birmingham's Old Mill, the Childrens Burial Ground and the Ring Fort. Like the adjudicator in 2012, we were most impressed with the achievement of the Committee in setting up this walk as it involved reaching agreement with the various land owners. The work undertaken on Cloondroon Lake is also commended and it provides a great example of how a natural resource can be significantly enhanced through the close co-operation of community groups, local anglers and Inland Fisheries. It is heartening to see that the work undertaken has already boosted biodiversity (with the arrival of the otters) and the initiatives (such as the field workshops) to raise awareness of the habitat are being well received. Given that a number of wildlife surveys that have now been undertaken in Milltown, it is strongly recommended that consideration is given to developing a tidy towns website whereby this information can be uploaded and viewed (and even added to) by everyone.

Litter Control:

The standard of litter control in Milltown is exceptionally high and this is a significant achievement given the large volumes of traffic that pass through the town on a daily basis allied with the on-going road works and disruption. Despite these challenges, the village was almost litter free on the day of adjudication with one exception and that was outside the Millbrook entrance on the N17 where some litter was spotted. However, this was an isolated incident and did not detract from your performance or current high mark under this category. This strong performance is a reflection of the hard work that has been put into litter control by the Committee and volunteers through clean up events and daily litter picks.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Following revisions in 2013, the emphasis in this category is on minimizing and eliminating the generation of waste. Committees are encouraged to think of new ways of raising awareness within their communities about the need to minimise and eliminate waste and to undertake actions at a local level that achieve this. In terms of raising awareness, we were delighted to read that a composting seminar was held and that the activity is now established with households in the Parish. As a follow on, consider undertaking a simple survey to find out what waste is being generated and by whom. This could be done with the assistance of the School (by asking the parents of the children to participate) and the findings could be used to come up with new actions to minimise and eliminate waste in Milltown. Well done on the expansion of the use of solar power and you are commended on the other actions listed in your entry form which included many high quality recycling initiatives. We would also like to hear about any waste minimisation actions that you undertake as a group. For example, do make your own compost or grow your own plants for use in your landscaping projects? Is rainwater harvested for use in your landscaping schemes?

Tidiness:

The adjudicator was impressed with the standard of tidiness achieved in Milltown despite the challenging conditions generated by a combination of high traffic volumes and extensive road works. Despite this, the vast majority of road sides, road verges, pavements and public areas were neat and tidy, appearing weed free and recently swept, while the natural stone walls were also in very good condition and all signs have clearly been subject to washing and cleaning. However, some small improvements are possible for 2014. The appearance of the landscaping beds at the N17 entrance to Millbrook could be improved as weed blocker was showing and the area behind what appears to be a substation or utility building at the same location was quite untidy looking and its rendered walls will require painting. The cordoned off gravel mound here should also be removed. The gate of Glynn's hardware and the black railings at the Dunmore Road entrance to Millbrook would both benefit from a coat of paint for next year.

Residential Areas:

Millbrook looked well on Adjudication Day but the Dunmore Road entrance to the estate achieved a higher standard than the N17 entrance in terms of landscaping and general appearance. The standard of individual houses and commercial properties in Milltown was considered to be high so full credit to everyone for all of their hard work as it gives an excellent impression of your village.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The village is dominated by the N17 route and the necessary works associated with the sewerage scheme currently being undertaken resulted in temporary traffic lights and a relatively long section on one side through the village being cordoned off. However, it was great to see that the natural stone walls, which are a lovely and consistent feature of the village appearing in good shape and looking very well. The quality of the footpath with its landscaped strip between the road and the footpath is an excellent feature as it helps to reduce the dominance of the roadway and improve the experience of the pedestrian. The approach roads into Milltown were generally very good, with well maintained verges and this was despite the proliferation of temporary signage that related to the current road works. The road surfacing is an issue in some places with sections of the hard shoulder in poor condition and one hopes that this issue will be resolved as part of the improvement works. The approach to Milltown on the Dunmore Road was also good, but once again, the quality of the road surface appears to be an issue.

General Impression:

The Committee are commended on another excellent performance in 2013 in which you have demonstrated that it is possible to continue to make significant progress despite the disruption caused by major (and necessary) improvement works to your village. Well done and we look forward to seeing you again in 2014.

Second Round Adjudication:

Public buildings in Milltown such as the School in cream with rust trims and the Garda Station looked very fresh. The striking modern church with its dramatic interior looked well although some staining was evident to uprights beside the side doors and flakiness to the concrete angled structural features. Mullarkeys looked very cheerful with hanging baskets. Burkes is a fine traditional shopfront which would benefit from a fresh coat of paint. The adjacent colourful displays atop the stone wall looked charming. The retention of the traditional square sign in the car park is to be commended - it was freshly painted. The children's playground was been well used on the day and the associated park is a marvellous facility to have in the village centre. The recycling area was neat and well cared for. The approach roads make a good impression and must be difficult to maintain given the volume and speed of traffic on the busy N17 - well done to all concerned! The stone name plates denoting townlands were admired. Gates had been freshly painted along roadsides. Discourage advertising hoardings - they can give roadways a very cluttered appearance - mature trees in these areas create a positive impact. Roadworks had been more or less completed since first adjudication - some orange cones were still evident at the Sligo side of the village - road surfaces were generally in good order. It was marvellous to revisit Milltown after a number of years - it is a village that never fails to impress.