

Tidy Towns Competition 2014

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Milltown** Ref: **202**
County: **Galway** Mark: **307**
Category: **B** Date(s): **09/07/2014**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2014 |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------------|
| Community Involvement & Planning | 60 | 47 |
| Built Environment and Streetscape | 50 | 39 |
| Landscaping and Open Spaces | 50 | 47 |
| Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities | 50 | 35 |
| Sustainable Waste and Resource Management | 50 | 18 |
| Tidiness and Litter Control | 90 | 62 |
| Residential Streets & Housing Areas | 50 | 27 |
| Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes | 50 | 32 |
| TOTAL MARK | 450 | 307 |

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Milltown is once again warmly welcomed to the 2014 SuperValu Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for the completed entry form, the splendid annotated map and the comprehensive folders of photographs and correspondence, all of which collectively gives an excellent overview of your activities over the past 12 month. It is many year since this adjudicator had the opportunity to visit your village. His happy memory of that occasion and the comprehensive documentation you sent still did not adequately alert him to the incredible vista that was to be unfolded. One of the most faithful participating centres down the years your secretaries records is never likely to be exceed; 52 years of service to the Tidy Towns movement and the community of Milltown stands supreme. He richly deserves and is congratulated on receiving the well merited Rehab People of the Year Award (Volunteering) and also the Galway County Council Mayors Supreme Award for the county in 2014.

The transformation of Milltown over the years is a wonderful legacy and part of your successes is surely the close and successful relationship you have established with the County Council, The Heritage Officer there, OPW, National Parks Wildlife services, the Wildlife Ranger, the GAA and all the other agencies and association within Milltown itself. The close links nurtured with the two school principals ensures that the ethos and enthusiasm for the Tidy Towns movement will truly be trans-generational. This year's wonderful schedule of actions actually achieved, totalling 150, is a ringing endorsement of the extent to which the entire community has gotten behind the Tidy Towns effort.

The sizable volume of through traffic continues to be a major intrusion into village life. There is a clear, obvious need for appropriate traffic calming facilities to be provided. We hope your current application to the County Council will bear fruit in short order. Your governance structure is most successful, 12 person committee and with 3 public meetings so that all are fully advised and can take part ownership in the range of activities you undertake. The committee meet every month between February and August and twice in the winter. Your idea of "street captains" on each road and area, which are charged with organising litter patrols, clean-ups, flowerbeds and related activities, is clearly working most successfully. The major sewerage scheme which has had the effect of putting various plans and objectives on hold is a necessary but short term disruption which will be quickly forgotten. Congratulations on the extent of cooperation you have got from farm owners for the coordinated blue and white farm gates; these are excellent and add greatly to the roadside vista. The very length of Milltown village has emphasised the need for clear cut entry points at both the Tuam and Sligo Roads approaches. The coordination of road signs perhaps together with the traffic calming when it arrives may help in this. But being on the busy N17 it is, in the view of this adjudicator that traffic calming is a priority objective for all concerned.

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

All the civic, commercial and social building stock has been very well presented. We admired the school on the approach from Tuam, it was suitably swept and flying the Irish and European flags in addition to the Green Flag. The Church of an interesting design was very well presented; of course no litter but the grounds might offer additional opportunities for more imaginative floral expression. The Garda Station was freshly painted with flowerbeds and hanging baskets. The Hall beside was also freshly painted and suitably embellished by flowers. The Health Centre with flowers in the foreground was admired. The businesses of the town were equally bright and well presented. Ryan's Lounge Bar, being repainted on the day of adjudication, Mullarkey's featured exceptional planting with window boxes at the front and side. We greatly admired the long wall, painted in many different colours, beyond Glynn's. Finn's Bar and Restaurant in its crisp black and white livery caught the eye. The Community and Heritage Centre maintained the same high standard. M J Molloy (1914-1994) is an important local figure and it is fitting that his home is signposted. However it does need attention as there are very obvious weeds in the gutter and the gate needs to be repainted before next year's competition. A delightful occurrence on the day of adjudication was the small donkey waiting patiently by the front door. We admired the painted images on Glynn's Hardware window. Substantial work has been done insuring that the built heritage is maintained and appropriately projected. It is delightful that the two limestone windowsills from the old presbytery are being used as seats and placed in the Heritage Park. The mill water outlet at O'Grady's Mill now whitewashed was greatly admired.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

It is quite clear that no opportunity is neglected to introduce colourful flowering. The practice of inserting them into the top of walls is proving most successful, the river bridge being a prime example, but far from the only one. While you will continue to use planter very extensively do explore the ground planting option wherever appropriate. The children's play area was very well equipped and presented and we admired the three flags flying there. The upgraded Tennis Court grounds were noted.

The Riverside Park is a joy, it brings together heritage and folk tradition, wildlife and ecology and a fascinating array of information all projected in a delightful, consumer friendly format. The range of subject matter covered is voluminous; the pre 1856 river crossing point, trees and their origins, cedar of Lebanon, the memorial to John Birmingham (1816-1884) astronomer, geologist, poet and Local historian is covered. The Bellew mounting stone, a seat in memory of Frank Mullarkey and the seat from Flannery's Pub, most interesting details on animals, reptiles, birds and then with perfect timing mother duck and family quacked and fussed to ensure they played their part as well. A visit to the park is like the hazel tree itself embracing wisdom, poetic inspiration and mystical knowledge. It is small wonder this delightful entity has been a National Award Winner. There is also excellent planting throughout the rest of the centre. The new tennis and basketball court are a delight. The work done on developing the River Walk is mammoth and successful, hopefully over time the planting of a suitable hedging might be undertaken. Perhaps whitethorn or similar native hedging would be preferred.

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

The splendid Dawros Russelton Walk, incorporated into your Slí Na Sláinte provides many opportunities for contact with birds and wildlife. The work done on the Famine Relief Road since 1998/9 has created a delightful vista with raised flowerbeds and shrubs on either side. On the day of adjudication one side only of the road was swept which detracted slightly from the overall vista. We admired the Bird Sanctuary at the junction of the walk with the roadway leading back into the town. The Riverside Walk is a positive delight in terms of experiencing the Irish countryside at its best. Again the provision of explanatory signs adds greatly to ones enjoyment and pleasure on this idyllic walk. The provision of the Butterfly Park, the bug hotel and the details about bats, owls and other creatures all serve to underscore their central role in your overall presentation.

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

That all 24 new educational tree stands have been made locally with recycled material is evidence of your commitment to the Reduce, Reuse and Recycle ethos. We admired the solar panels on houses, some being retrofitted. We welcomed the issuing of reusable shopping bags; a simple gesture in itself but significant in the overall scheme of things. Food wastage is an ongoing cost on householders. We welcomed the 12 households participating in the 'Food Waste Prevention' programme. The significant savings in money terms at individual household level is coupled with the substantial community wide saving making this a natural for priority action. The extension to Green Business Waste Prevention Programme undertaken by Finns Restaurant, Mill Meat's and Ryan's Daybreak are already recorded economic savings. The primary schools participating in the poster competition to encourage awareness of food waste prevention is another positive development. The home composting presentation is a worthwhile and additional focus, insuring as much items as possible are reused rather than becoming additional items in a landfill.

The Greens Schools programme is proving most successful and congratulations to Belmont National School for receiving their fourth Green Flag for travel recently and Milltown National School their third for water conservation also this year. You have also been active and energetic in recycling items, used household oil, cardboard, plastic and even shredded paper has been collected and used again in a variety of ways. The recycled ESB poles were admired in the Heritage Park as were two limestone windowsills now used as seats in the same area. The Bottle Bank was clearly being used but also respected as it was neat, clean and free of all litter.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

The related activities of litter control and tidiness have been amalgamated this year into one composite category. Many projects have been undertaken under this heading. Perhaps the most visual and successful has been the repainting of many gates in a uniform blue and white livery. This is most successful and compliments to all the farmers and landowners who co-operated in the delightful scheme. Painting all the galvanised poles along the road black was noticed. The scourge of gum litter on footpaths will hopefully be materially reduced by the awareness programme initiated by the County Council in various schools. Your success in overcoming the inevitable disruption arising from the laying of pipes for the new multimillion sewerage scheme was most successfully completed. The involvement of the schools and others in the National Spring Clean-up campaign all served to underscore the reality that we are all involved in the reduction and eliminating of litter and untidiness.

It is interesting that your no litter bin policy on the River Walk has been such a success. It is a very small ask of the people who enjoy this delightful facility to simply take home their own rubbish Thank you for responding so positively to the suggestion from my colleague last year that Glynn's Hearse Shed should be power washed and painted and attention giving in that area to tidying up. Your entry form lists many items undertaken during the year, some small some major. The sizable empty site beside the housing estate detracts somewhat and perhaps a suitable hedge screening might be considered in this location. The loose gravel outside the GAA Grounds detracted a little. The ideal is appropriate hard ground covering but in the meantime more frequent sweeping would enhance this area. All have contributed to a delightful cohesive, neat and orderly village which is a joy to visit.

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

It is great to see additional building like the fine house opposite the Heritage Centre, one of many new houses being built in the village. Compliments to the Millbrook Estate householders who are taking control of their own estate maintenance. It looked very well presented on the day of adjudication. Gort Na Loura estate was well presented and a number of houses had exceptional gardens. The efforts being made by individual householders along the Main Road with window boxes and hanging baskets are applauded.

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

Well done on the manner with which all signs have been washed and their supporting poles painted black and as necessary washed. The reinstatement of the hard shoulder north of the village after the pipe laying has matured very well. The resurfacing of the Dawros Road was admired as was the enhanced lettering on the townland stone. The Village Pump looked well in its new paint and the flowers in this area were a delight. The daffodils and spring flowers will certainly enhance the southern approaches during spring. The Tuam approach road was well swept albeit the long block wall on the approach is somewhat dull. Perhaps the capstones might be painted to add some colour to this approach. We admired the very pleasant planting at the village nameplate sign. Well done on the display of the Tidy Towns Bronze Award Plaque while the speed limit signs were both clean and fully visible. We welcomed the new signs for the Ring Fort and Souterrain. Approaching the town from the Slí na Sláinte route the village name plate was impeccably produced with flowers beneath. The Sligo approach (north) featured very pleasant planting but the road surface in spots was below par. The sign bidding welcome in many languages and outlining the town's history in writing, astronomy and the church was admired.

It was a pleasure to visit Milltown and congratulation to all involved on a truly spectacular and pleasant presentation.