

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Durrow - Darú** Ref: **412**
County: **Laois** Mark: **324**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/06/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	48	49
Streetscape & Public Places	60	47	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	47	47
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	33	34
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	18	21
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	56	56
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	35	35
TOTAL MARK	470	318	324

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Durrow – Darú páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Thank you for your application and accompany Community Plan 2019 to 2023. Significant work has went into the production of this new plan and key to this was the extensive community consultation and consideration of all submitted comments on a future vision for the town. You have a healthy sized committee and garner a good level of support from local volunteers. You are working collaboratively with a wide range of organisations agencies, bodies and businesses in the local area which is great to see. We are delighted that you recognise the importance of community inclusion and are striving to communicate to all your stakeholders, young and old by a variety of different mediums. You are active on Facebook and have a good presence on the www.durrow.ie website. We thank Our Lady's Meadow Primary School for their eagerness to assist Durrow TidyTowns. Ensuring the young people grow up with a spirit of volunteerism will stand them well and hopefully their involvement with TidyTowns will be the start of a lasting commitment to engagement in your community. We would ask that you try and ensure you are placing your projects under the correct competition category. As an example, in Community Involvement and Planning you give us a lot of information on your Christmas waste survey – all of this detail would have been better included under the Sustainability category. Rest assured we have taken it into consideration. In terms of your population size we understand from the most recent census data that you fall into the small town category (population of Durrow ED – 1,258) and in this adjudicators opinion Durrow is more like a small town (Competition Category C) rather than a village (Competition Category B) and you should apply for the appropriate population category next year. Another tip – you have scope to cut down on the amount of text submitted on your application form. Succinct bullet points detailing new projects (N), maintained projects (M) and future planned projects (FP) is all that is required. It was difficult to distinguish easily between new and maintained and future planned projects for you as you marked some projects down as new and maintained, new and future planned etc. This leads to confusion with the adjudicator as to whether additional marks should be allocated or not, hence why some more clarity around your application form and competition categories would be beneficial all round. Your adjudicator wishes to highlight at the outset of this report that everything included in your detailed application could not be commented upon in a short report that covers all eight categories but be assured that all your work was given the worthy consideration it deserves. You received a healthy increase in this section last year and due to the work on your plan receive an increase this year again.

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

You are fortunate to have a lovely large town Square that acts as a focal point. The many fine Georgian residences were admired on the northern side of the square (we actually got parked up here). The Bridge and also your main thoroughfares are also to a good standard and have buildings or interest or that catch the eye. The entrance gates to Castle Durrow are impressive and nearby we noted the striking historic map of Durrow by artist Marie Martin.

You also have a number of sculptures scattered throughout the town that add interest. The current playpark is a great facility but we note that you have received a quotation to upgrade parts of it and add on an amenity / picnic area. There are a number of well-presented business premises in the town. On Mary Street the Credit Union and the Pharmacy were noted positively for their fresh presentation. Bowe's Café and Sheppard's Auction House looked well. Bobs Bar at the bridge looks very attractive and we liked the various artefacts harking back to our past. Hopefully in the future we can return while 'off-duty' to hire a High Nelly and further explore your area and get to view Michael's collectables in the bar. The new club house was noted and we wish the kayak and canoe club many happy and safe years of paddling from this base! The Church on Carrigan Street and the decorative door of the Community Centre / Scout Hall were admired. We understand from your application that extensive renovation works have been carried out on the hall over the past twelve months.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

There are a number of high quality landscaped areas in and around the town. You are fortunate to have two local garden centres who are hands-on in supporting your projects. The Town Green looks well and the area where the metal swans are located is also well cared for. Further management of your green spaces for biodiversity and with pollinators in mind is welcomed. The Mill Road Amenity Area is completed to a high standard and we liked the stone slabs detailing the milling history associated with Durrow. Your adjudicator recently learned of the Frenchman Tanguy de Toilgoet, at Dumore Country School, who would be another wealth of information to your group. Perhaps he would be willing to share some of his knowledge with your group. His vision and horticultural practices would appear to align well with those of the Tidy Towns competition.

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

You are fortunate to have the River Erkina flowing through the town and mature trees at various locations. We note from inclusion elsewhere that you mention Capponellagh Woods but it is not located on your map. The alluvial woodland site a few km from the town is also not marked on your map. Perhaps these should be signposted from the town in order to raise their awareness amongst visitors and tourists. Include the map guide just in case next year's adjudicator has time to view these areas for themselves. You have scope under this category to develop an area for the promotion of your natural environment. You detail a future planned project of a water amenity area so we will await plans for this. We noted small scale water abstraction using a tractor and tanker from the river at the Bridge, given that this is a rare freshwater pearl mussel river care should be taken in relation to this to ensure no disturbance.

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

The school visit to Cocoa Couture that you facilitated was educational in that the children learned about sourcing local produce such as honey, biodegradable packaging and waste associated with Easter Eggs. In conjunction with Durrow Development Forum you carried out a survey with the school to ascertain the level of knowledge on waste and recycling. The school have also been busy with the clothing recycling project which tied in well with your 40 Day Lent Challenge, donating to the St. Vincent de Paul shop in Abbeyleix. The Lent Plastic Challenge was also a worthy initiative. Thanks for including your materials in relation to the Christmas Time Recycling campaign – we especially liked your '12 Ways to Minimise your Christmas Waste' promotional material. Perhaps for this Christmas you could repeat and ask some local businesses to donate vouchers for the best ideas and examples. You have also been greening the Scarecrow Festival. Is it to be 100% green this year coming for all stall holders? The 'Get Your Bin Sorted' Workshop through the Voice Recycling Programme is a good initiative that could be run routinely as there still seems to be householder confusion over what can and cannot be placed in each bin. You have rainwater harvesting in place also. Well done to the businesses who are trying to reduce plastic on produce and promote 'buy local'. We noted the Keep Cups for sale while in Bowe's for lunch. Supporting the Conscious Cup Campaign could be considered. Durrow also embraced the Poster Free election campaign. You are well on your way in this category. Due to the number of good quality projects you are being rewarded with a healthy points increase – we hope you can keep the momentum up. Try to get some media coverage and sing your own praises in relation to some of your activities under this category.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

In terms of litter control on the ground, as witnessed during our adjudication, it is best described as a 'mixed bag', unfortunately. On the green (across from Bowe's Café) there was litter around the wooden bench. Across the road, while the bus stop itself was clean, the overflowing litter bin beside it detracted. The solar powered compacting bins were not in place in this location. Litter was also noted on this green area and there were large numbers of cigarette butts around the bus stop. Elsewhere such as along the streets and approach roads litter control was to a better standard. Further awareness raising in relation to littering is required. We thank you for your participation in the Clean-Up Laois Week. We also thank the Laois Canoe and Kayak Club for regularly organising clean-ups of the area and along with riverbank. The Scouts are also actively involved in clean-ups and more sustainable approaches to projects - well done!

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

You have a number of well-presented and maintained estates such as Derrywood. We visited Seandoire and noted the large green area that has lots of potential. Consider working with the residents on a project such as a community orchard, fruit and nut garden, or polytunnel etc, however the buy-in from residents would need to be there to make this a success. We'd be interested to learn how you communicate with the various residents associations. Are they represented on your committee? The 5-Minute Clean Sweep initiative is taking effect and the

presentation of residential streets was to a good standard.

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

First off, traffic is busy in the town – this was noticeable to us as first-time visitors. Furthermore, haphazard street parking makes vehicular passage through the streets, such as Mary Street, more difficult. However, that said, on adjudication day there was a vibrancy and buzz to the town which is rarely seen in other small towns your size, which added positively to our adjudication experience. The snooker table planting on the approach to Durrow near St. Fintan's Terrace is a novel idea and definitely caught the eye of the adjudicator. There were extensive footpath works on-going when we visited in front of the Cat Walk / Copper Kettle. The new disability parking spaces were noted.

Concluding Remarks:

We thank all at Durrow TidyTowns for your long-standing commitment to the TidyTowns movement. With over 40 years participation you have seen both the competition and your town evolve. Your plan now provides a clear vision of how your community can work together to bring about improvements to your rich built and natural heritage. Your adjudicator believes that you have most of the key requirements considered necessary to move into the higher echelons of the competition – they just all need to marry together. We sincerely hope that with your sustained eagerness and renewed focus this will happen in the not too distant future.