

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Johnstown - Baile Eoin** Ref: **2213**
County: **Meath** Mark: **221**
Category: **F** Date(s): **08/07/2019**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	36	38
Streetscape & Public Places	60	28	29
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	30	29
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	17	18
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	11	12
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	39	42
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	27	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	25	25
TOTAL MARK	470	213	221

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Johnstown – Baile Eoin páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. Your entry form was excellent with 'before and after' photographs and a clear annotated map which made for easy navigation by your adjudicators exploring Johnstown.

The last two adjudicators had requested a copy of your long-term plan so it was great to see this enclosed with your entry form. The benefit of this is that local community groups can volunteer to lead on specific actions. For example, a group with a specific interest in wildlife might lead on one action that would help you advance in the category 'nature and biodiversity in your locality'. Do circulate this to see if any group is happy to lead on one or two actions. A long-term plan also keeps you focused and strategic in your work and helps you measure your successes.

With a small core committee, you have interacted and communicated with the large population of Johnstown. You have an impressive list of organisations, agencies and local businesses with whom you work. Your volunteers have attended training courses, conferences and organised fundraising quizzes and bag-packs as well as advancing your work.

With such a large number of residents in your area communication is very important. Your adjudicator was very impressed with the statistics provided regarding your Facebook postings. The litter-posts receive the biggest response. It is good that people are called to speak out about such incidences.

You are rightfully reticent to create a flyer that may turn into junk mail. However, you propose to link in Smith's SuperValu's communications which is a great idea. Your adjudicator could not find a community noticeboard here but normally SuperValu are very good at letting you advertise your activities in the store.

Your entry form was full of events and activities – make sure that when you do these you get credit. So have your name on PR material, on high visibility vests worn and on temporary signage boards. This may encourage others to join in too!

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

Johnstown is unusual in that nearly every building is recently built. You have no water pumps, milestones or significant built heritage features. But what you do have is people with a strong pride in their area. This will take you far.

The shopping centre was visited and there has been a lot of change here with many units opening including the new gym. Some weeding is required in the cobble lock outside the HSE building. There was some littering at this end of the car park but once works are completed at the gym hopefully this space will be cleared and look well. The bins in the car park were clean and serviced. This could be an ideal place for the provision of bottle recycling banks. Littering is normally a problem at bottle banks but it can be at clothes banks. The pavement around the car park at the shopping centre was clean and bins were in use. Taylors had some lovely hanging baskets and landscaping in front of the premises and looked very well Your adjudicator would like to commend the Boyle Sports here as this bookie office was free of cigarette butts on the pavement outside – they were all inside your wall-mounted butt bin. What's your secret?

Your adjudicator was very impressed with the grounds of the Meath County Council buildings. Car parking spaces were prioritised for those car sharing. Sheltered, secured bike sheds were provided. Segregated waste bins were in place. A lovely bank of pollinator friendly flowers was growing along the embankment the front of the building. On adjudication day this was full of pollinators gorging themselves!

The IDA in Meath has a large campus in Johnstown and it would be a great coup if they were to sign up to support the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. Have you contacts there to persuade them to refrain from widespread mowing of grass here and save money and benefit wildlife by changing how they manage their green areas?

The new complexes in the School Campuses looked good. Take care for blocked roof-gutters here. Have any plans been drafted for the sustainable use of the old school building? Do ensure that the roof remains intact to keep this one older building in Johnstown raintight until plans have been drafted for it in the long term.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

Your adjudicator was simply shocked by the amount of herbicide sprayed throughout Johnstown under trees, under fences and particularly all around the school grounds even along the fence beside the vegetable garden. You have already raised this issue. This must stop and is unnecessary.

There are many maturing trees throughout Johnstown. Residents are asked to check that the support straps/stays are not rubbing or damaging the bark of trees. You have planted a lot of native trees in recent years -well done. Maybe you can appoint volunteer tree wardens to water newly planted trees in their first few years of growth?

There is no shortage of green space in Johnstown. You should try and estimate the total costs spent by all the residents in cutting grass across your community. It is suspected that this would be very high! To save a lot of money and time you are asked to try and encourage certain estates to change their mowing regimes, even if only for a small area. One idea would be to allow large discreet circles of grass to grow long and flower. This would be of benefit to pollinators whose populations have been decimated in recent decades. There is a lovely video on the website www.pollinators.ie showing what Geashill Tidy Towns have achieved through simple changes on how they cut grass to benefit pollinators.

Your volunteers attended national tidy towns conference in February and learnt a lot, not just on grass cuttings, but on the flowers and plants that benefit pollinators. You plan to change your choice of flowers in your landscaping scheme to more pollinator friendly ones. The website listed above gives some great ideas flowers for Planters and hanging baskets. You can also share this with homeowners and offer spot prizes to the most wildlife friendly front garden example.

The raised beds at the entrance to the schools had some pollinator friendly plants including lavender and hebes. Avoid begonias as these traditional bedding plants offer little for pollinators.

The People's Park is one area where the public congregate and you have run very successful events such as your dog show here. Indeed, they were so successful you are moving to a larger venue! You are sewing giant daisy seeds here which should form a lovely display but they were not obvious during adjudication.

Another idea would be in key areas scatter a seed mix so that you could have poppies and cornflowers for all to enjoy including pollinators. There is a lovely stretch of flowers in front of the council offices that you can easily replicate on approach roads into Johnstown.

Low hanging branches were trimmed this year and you propose to continue this annually. Maybe do this every two year to avoid trees been overzealously pruned.

When tree planting you are recommended where at all possible to plant native species. There are also many special non-native species that are of benefit to pollinators and work well in more urban settings. However please refrain from planting more laurel hedging as this offers very little for wildlife.

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

The river trail will be a lovely amenity giving close access to the river. The river is afforded the highest protection afforded by Europe – it is designated as a Special Area of Conservation, as it is a tributary to the Boyne, and a Special Protection Area. These designations are for the wildlife and habitats located here, as well as the bird populations that they support.

You are taking the right steps by finding out what species of plants and animals are located here. Once you've done this basic audit you can then devise actions to best enhance this area appropriately to allow more to enjoy it.

Consider running guided wildlife walks or bat walks along this area and maybe in the long-term provide wildlife information? You could run a community workshop where families assemble and name bird boxes that would be placed along the trail by your volunteers.

In residential estates you hope to run wildlife friendly activities including building bug boxes and bird boxes. The best insect hotels are small natural ones as they don't harbour disease. There is great information online with templates for the correct design and where to best erect bird and bat boxes. As an adjudicator we see a lot of bird boxes of very poor design and placed in very inappropriate locations.

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

With long stretches of cycle routes have you thought about running cycling proficiency classes in schools? It is great to read that the primary school is running a walking bus. Some, but not all, bus stops had timetable information on display.

Ironically due to the drought you have little interest from residents in water butts! You recommended to try this again to see if you get more uptake!

The TidyTowns website has an information booklet on actions to promote sustainability. Your Environmental Awareness Officer also would have ideas.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

Your adjudicator was impressed that you carried out an audit of your community to identify all areas with graffiti. These were then removed thanks to a grant from Meath County Council.

You have identified trouble spots and are working with residents and the council to replant areas to discourage unwanted gatherings. Perhaps you can also talk to teenagers on what they would like to see in the community? Maybe a skate park would engage them?

Dog fouling was an issue at the People's Park and you have provided 'Mutt Mitts' dispensers to facilitate dog owners picking up their dogs waste. Do you need to provide bins for these bags when full? Have you got personnel who would empty these bins if you put them up?

Commercial signage at Athlumney shopping centre was very poor with signs rusty and broken.

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

There are many benefits for residential estates to link in with your committee. This should be encouraged and effort put into this.

Homes throughout Johnstown were nicely presented. Small, raised landscaped beds at the entrance to Athlumney Abbey looked well with shrubs that provide year-round structure but also perennials that were bright, colourful and beneficial to pollinators.

You are commended for your proactive approach to grass management at Johnstown Wood Estate. Costs savings and a new mowing regime have been implemented. This is not only reducing maintenance costs for the residents but also helping pollinators.

Some of the name signs into estate at Johnstown Wood were only in English, and were not positioned at the top of the galvanised metal posts. Athlumney Hall had some lovely flowers and planters at the entrance to this estate.

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

Crossing St Martha's bridge made for a lovely arrival into Johnstown as it was clean and had nice hanging baskets welcoming you into the community. There is a long wooden fence on Bothar Síon. The last section of this has collapsed. Doors nearby for deliveries to the Shopping Centre could be enhanced. There was also a very large National Development Plan sign here. The guidelines state that these unsightly signs have to be in place for just 3 years after the competition of the project. The time frame should have passed so please request that the council have it removed.

Connectivity is important so it was good to see large stretches of cycle lanes and the provision of cycle sheds and the school and at the council offices. There were no cycle racks however around the supermarket and this is recommended.

You have mentioned in your entry form about shortcuts and children trying to climb the walls to save a long walk. If you have a long-term plan you could be in discussions about facilitating easy access routes for pedestrian and cyclists.

The central roundabout now has a sponsor which helps pay for the grass management of the roundabout. Due to

volumes of traffic many of the bricks are missing. You are ready aware of this and have discussed this with the council. A good feature could be made here that does not require maintenance or access which would not be prohibited for H&S reasons.

It is great to read that the school roundabout is to change. A lot of effort goes into mowing and maintaining the circle of grass. Planting crocuses and native bluebells could be added to your plans for here.

Have you considered installing outdoor gym equipment anywhere? Whilst the People's Park is a private maybe these could be space typed along the main footpaths for the use of walkers?

Concluding Remarks:

As a group that only started three years ago you have a really good understanding of the important aspects of this competition - people working together, and bettering your community for everyone to enjoy. It was lovely to read your entry form that one of the benefits of participation in TidyTowns is that locals have met their neighbours and made friends. Well done on your great efforts these past 12 months.