

# Tidy Towns Competition 2016

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mullagh** Ref: **1097**  
County: **Cavan** Mark: **271**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **16/06/2016**

	<b>Maximum Mark</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2015</b>	<b>Mark Awarded 2016</b>
Community Involvement & Planning	60	35	35
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	35	36
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	37	38
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	25	26
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	13	14
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	59	60
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	28	28
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	33	34
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>271</b>

### Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Fáilte An Mulach! Welcome Mullagh to the Super Valu 2016 National Tidy Towns Competition. You tell us that you have 22 members on your committee. This seems like an enormous unmanageable number. Perhaps you mean volunteers with a lesser number on your actual committee? You hold monthly meetings of the committee and quarterly community input meetings. You list four agencies and bodies and businesses that have supported your activities. These are very relevant and necessary supports. You do not mention local business, although we imagine that Mullagh Tourism (which you do mention) consists of a number of business members.

You use modern and traditional methods of communication. This will appeal to all age groups. The children from the school are involved in a poly tunnel and the GAA club have organised evening litter pickups. Thank you for the photographs of the teenagers on the litter picks.

For the last 12 years the community has entered the competition and in so doing is taking more pride in their town. This, you say, in turn leads to major improvements and less antisocial behaviour.

Last year's adjudicator said "there appears to be no plan for the village, no plan was enclosed and last year's report does not mention one either. Maybe you have one in place, if so send a copy with next year's application'. For the third year running now we have not received any plan from your group. A three or five-year plan will focus your mind on the important issues facing you, and it will help you to prioritise your work. A plan need not be prepared professionally, but you should consult widely locally in preparing such a plan. You should tell us as to how you went about this consultation. You should also consider any statutory and non-statutory plans applicable to your town in drawing up your work programme. It is difficult to advance in this category in the absence of such a plan. Please do refer to the Tidy Towns Handbook for advice in relation to the preparation of a three or five-year plan. We would suggest that you layout your plan on the basis of the competition categories.

A good map is essential to your entry. Your town map was diagrammatic and not very comprehensive. You did not show all key public buildings and landmarks as requested -just some. You are specifically advised in 'how to complete your Supervalu Tidy Towns entry form not to use Google mapping as this is often unclear/inaccurate.' One of your 2 maps was a Google map. Section 5 goes onto say that "failure to include an adequate map may lead to a mark reduction under this adjudication category". The entry form guidelines also asks that you number each new or continuing project throughout the entry form under each category heading (as per section 3 in the entry form guidelines) and that you use the same numbers on a key to the town map (where the projects are ones which can be mapped). We recommend that you carefully study the guidelines to completing your entry form annually. Do not leave it to one person to do and do not leave it until the last minute. Sometimes groups get so involved in working on the ground that they rush putting the entry form together. It is very helpful to an adjudicator to have a good clear

map showing all the new and continuing projects.

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

Some projects which you enter under this category heading belong more correctly to other categories where we credit them. The first project you mention under this category heading i.e. floral displays of hanging baskets - we consider under the Landscaping category. Planting of wildflowers on a new walkway to the lake belongs to the Wildlife etc. category and we consider it there. The better signage to the Hill of Mullagh is considered under Roads etc. category and the planting of flowers in public areas is considered under Landscaping.

Well done on the repairs to the stone walls in the town. The planting of trees along the Main Street adds to the attractiveness of the street. Well done on painting the street furniture and picnic benches.

The Aras Chillian /St. Killian Centre is a wonderful amenity, and we very much admired its stone elevation and green well maintained surrounds. The stone carving of the saint in the grounds is, we read, a copy of a Romanesque Relief made around 1180 for the cloister in Wurzburg. The picnic tables were inviting but time beckoned! We took our break for the day by visiting the centre's audio visual film! We enjoyed it very much.

Both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland are very well presented. We admired the nice gates at the Catholic Church and parochial house. They are fine iron gates with lovely stone pillars. Flagpoles at the Catholic Church were empty. The modern stone sculpture of the saint in the church grounds is a very fine piece of modern art. The church has well maintained grounds. Of course we do not adjudicate the inside of buildings, but we did visit to see the St. Killian shrine and we also admired the old baptismal font.

The outline of your saint on the gable wall of the school as one approaches the street - with the Irish inscription Scoil Naomh Cillín and the representation of the boat on which he sailed to Europe – looked well.

We liked the novel idea of an old photographic representation of the street 'set against' the modern street. It shows how little has changed with regard to the good architectural vernacular character of the street. This is good – no ugly or out-of-street line insertions have destroyed the street line. The properties in the street are generally extremely well maintained. Undergrounding power lines is an expensive and future project. In the meantime we would suggest that you do not attach hanging baskets to poles – as this simply draws attention to the many poles and power lines. Paving along the footpaths and in the park was in good condition and clean. We liked the street trees on paved 'out-shots'. Litter bins were clean.

Mc Namee's property impressed the adjudicator with its clean painted walls and timber sash windows – together with its traditional shop front and glazing bars.

Properties near Unicuts appeared unused, and it would be good if their windows could be used to display some local tourism/heritage information as the row looks poorly. The 'Little Bugs' sign in one of these windows was worn and faded. Some painting of fascia boards etc. here also would help. Shuttered premises – especially during day time hours look forbidding and take from the streetscape. At night if shutters are necessary it is best if they can be placed behind window displays, so that light can permeate to the street. The Post Office building was clean. The large blue shed premises on the Main Street/Bailieborough Road junction would benefit from painting -especially at the lower levels of the building. Projecting lights such as those over the otherwise well presented Credit Union detract from shop front/office fronts as they are obtrusive in the street line. Recessed lighting is preferable. However, if the building is a protected structure planning consent must be sought for works thereto. The background paint at the Credit Union – behind the name sign requires repainting. We admired the Paddy Fox premises and the nice door fanlight nearby.

Mullagh Hall was very well presented, but an abandoned business nearby took from the overall good effect of the pristine hall. On this disused site signage and walls needed painting and the removal of the old rusty pumps. The Garda Station was well presented. Across the road cartwheel type gates needed paint.

### **Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:**

Floral displays of hanging baskets have their place, but we would be encouraging you to be more sustainable in your planting and to plant in the soil. As last year's adjudicators said "Sustainable landscaping providing year-round colour is recommended for its benefits to wildlife and it is also more cost effective." This saves on maintenance and watering. It is also more appropriate in a rural town or village not to create a formal urban landscape type environment. Hanging basket brackets can damage shop fronts etc. They are useful to brighten up a rundown corner or an area where there are rundown laneways or old sheds. We would have liked to have seen a photograph of the daffodils and tulips when they were in bloom - as by the time of adjudication they are well gone. Removing weeds from the pavement and other weeding projects are projects we consider under the Tidiness category. Well done on maintaining the banks and strimming grass to maintain open spaces to the highest standard.

You appear to make no mention of the lake shore area which is a particularly magnificent landscaped area at the edge of your town. Do you maintain it? The peaceful area has wonderfully calm views across to the crannóg in the lake. We wondered about the cut vegetation/trees around the water's edge at the crannog. Perhaps you can tell us if this was storm damage - or why and by whom the vegetation was cut/sinking into the lake here. The wild grass edges to the lake must be home to many aquatic/semi aquatic species and the water lilies were 'Van Gough-like' in their yellow colours. The picnic table and seating need restoration work. Foliage covered a fishing notice sign (in

several languages) – making it difficult to read. We found signage there to be in good condition - and we loved the pot of yellow and purple flowers under the Mullagh Lough sign.

The playground is set in lovely surrounds and is a great amenity. The Peoples' Park is a wonderful amenity and it is very well landscaped and maintained. There are many features of interest to engage the visitor.

The large 'hard landscaped' area across from the Credit Union would look better if surfaced/paved. (surrounded by cream potted planters). However as road works etc. were in progress at this end of the Main Street on adjudication day we expect that this area will look better next year. The brightly planted flower troughs on the Bailieborough junction looked well. However we need to be careful with the use of black in street furniture (the troughs are black) as black is the most difficult colour for people with visual impairment to see.

We would not choose tyres as landscape elements as at the Bring Bank site.

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

You say that your local school is again working to promote awareness of wildlife and their habitats. However you have given us no information whatsoever as to how they are achieving this. Well done on the planting of wildflowers on the Virginia Road. Leaving a large area of unmowed grass and the mulching of leaves in the People's Park will be beneficial to wildlife in the town.

The wildlife signage at your lake is excellent and informative. In future though – try to include the Irish names of the species in any new signage. We saw the signage at the lake commemorating St. Killian's schoolchildrens' trip to the bog 2014 – but you have told us nothing about this in your entry either.

You might engage with the County Heritage Officer - and with the County Biodiversity Officer - if your County engages such an officer also - in exploring ways in which to further your knowledge and interpretation in this category. The Tidy Towns Handbook is also there as a relevant helpful publication. The Heritage Council's 'Wildlife in Towns and Villages' booklet is another useful resource.

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

We note that the 2014 adjudicator suggested that more events to create awareness of waste management be organised. Last year's adjudicator said that there was no indication in your application that this has happened. Neither have you told us about any such events this year.

We noted four Green Flags at the school and the 'WOW' walk to work school sign. You do not mention that the school participates in the Green Flag programme. Having a group of young people so advanced in this programme - we feel it would be of great benefit if you could work with them to spread the knowledge and enthusiasm they will have acquired with regard to so many aspects of sustainable waste and resource management - through participation in the Green Flag programme. We noted the herbs and fruit garden also and their 'gairdín glasrí when we walked past the school.

It is now common practice but important to recycle litter removed from the roadways as you have done. Remember that sustainable waste and resource management is primarily about endeavouring to prevent the production of waste before it even becomes necessary to recycle it. Could you get the local businesses involved? Would you considered joining the Green Homes scheme? We would strongly recommend that you contact the Environmental Awareness Officer of your local authority whom we are sure would be very happy to advise you as to how to advance in this work. We note your removal of water from the lake - for plant watering. The new leaf mulching has already been mentioned under Wildlife etc.

### **Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:**

Your annual litter pick with the involvement of the football club is praiseworthy and your weekly litter pick on approach roads and on Mullagh Hill is to be commended. Obviously this is being effective as litter was not a problem in your town on adjudication day. Well done on the removal of all posters on a regular basis!

Removing weeds from the pavement and along the whitethorn hedge is a project we consider here under the Tidiness category. Well done on this work and in keeping weeds under control. Although you entered this work under Landscaping etc. we credit it here under this category heading.

You are encouraging those still living in the town to assist in keeping the buildings painted and clean. You infer by this comment that a lot of people have moved out of town and that some buildings are unoccupied.

A property boundary wall and gate along the side of the Peoples' Park would need painting. A picnic table is in a bad state in the park. The Bring Banks were neat apart from a few pieces of litter near the grey bins. Some of the notices were somewhat torn. But the paper receptacles were full to overflowing on adjudication day. A green shed and associated green fence needs painting in this vicinity. Apart from one discarded bottle the park was litter free

There was an empty old garage type sign beside a grey corrugated building near the crossroads at the top of the

Main Street.

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

You tell us there has been much improvement in the appearance of the many estates around the town in the last number of years. No doubt you have been party to this improvement. In 2016 you continue to liaise with the residents' committees to continue the good work. Well done on this achievement! Generally the houses in the town looked well. There are many new estates so you are kept busy!

We admired An Solas estate on the Virginia approach road which has good stone walls and nice planting of semi mature trees. This is a very impressive development and a lovely introduction to your town. Further in towards the town there was an estate on the right-hand side which was not named.

We admired a cream house in the main street with red doors /window reveals and with unusual triangular hanging flower arrangements.

A problem we had in adjudicating was that so many of the housing estates had no name on the ground. Neither did you give us details of the housing estates on your map. We had to resort to Google! A project for next year might involve providing name signs such as stone boulder signs for every housing estate in your town. If we have made incorrect references to naming some of these estates this is the reason. There were some empty flagpoles at Killian's Court. We admired the wooden pergola and the stone boulder. Some nice young trees continue the tradition of trees on the approaches. Some painting of walls was necessary opposite the Green especially on the rounded house wall facing the approach near Ardlo Manor entrance. It is good to see new housing formed along an existing street front keeping the same building line. It gives cohesion to the streetscape. There was some good on-footpath planting in this locality.

We noted that Curragh Park was a local Tidy Towns' estate winner in 2009.

On the Rosehill approach there was another estate here (with single storey houses) with no name (St. Killian's?) - just beyond Wellman. We found a little litter in this area and an undeveloped area at the bottom of the estate was weedy. This estate appears to have been opened in 2003. A plaque needs painting. There is a nice row of semi mature trees fronting an estate We saw the Mullagh water conservation plaque 2014, but this plaque gave no more information. The estate on the town side of St Killian's had no name either. Sliabh Rosann estate is very well landscaped. The cul-de-sac opposite had no name and some land in front of the houses was overgrown. In St Killian's Park some painting is required. Yet another unnamed estate was noted on the Whitegate approach. Finally the estate opposite Brookfield is also unnamed.

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

The adjudicator's first impression of the town was a visit to St Killian's Well and a brief stop at the lake shore on the Virginia approach road. We liked the very large boulder at the entrance to the Well footpath with the Tobar Cheallachain sign. However the parking area was very weedy and the path seemed closed off by what appeared to be an electric fence. There were a lot of weeds around the lovely dry stone wall entrance. This Virginia approach road had some overgrown verges around the 50 K pH speed limit signs. The large construction site of the school will presumably be complete by 2017, but meanwhile car parking associated with the work parked on the L7046 You say that your biggest challenge in the approach road area now is the road in front of the new school. You have met school management to progress work on this and we understand that you are still only at the planning stage approach. We understand that dealing with this project is important to you at present. Thank you for the photographs of the area.

The graveyard pillars and splay walls need paint as do the white gates which are rusting.

A seat was overgrown with vegetation near the Church of Ireland. The Church of Ireland and Teampaill Cheallaigh sites are in a peaceful glade, but there does not seem to be any suitable convenient parking for visitors. The 'path' leading to these sites and to the lake appears to be simply a yellow line separating traffic from pedestrians. Can this be improved upon? We have already referred to the good work done in weeding around the new whitethorn hedge, but as this happens to be on an approach road (along the Virginia road) we mention it here again. There are improvements also to the entrance to the Hill walk on the Virginia road. We note your photographs in this regard. The road surface along by the graveyard is very poor, but this is not helped by construction traffic.

On the Whitegate approach the road would benefit from resurfacing in places. Some boundary walls would also benefit from painting.

The long straight footpath between the church and the town was clean and weed free.

Signage – and in particular that at the playground area was clear and attractive. We also admired the 'Rantavan' sign. However near this sign we found a very abandoned village pump area with a rusting cream bucket. The adjacent site and the side of the pump site was surrounded by security fencing.

On the Kells approach would it be possible to remove the large retirement houses advertising hoarding? It would appear that these have never been developed. We admired the generic blue coloured town sign. This approach has well-kept houses and gardens. Some advertising - both temporary and permanent - was noted. Another estate near

the town had no name sign and the end wall facing the road needs replastering. Otherwise this approach has good clean footpaths and good stone walling,

At the Mullagh sports centre and Edwin Carolan Community Park the long boundary wall might be painted - and the long road-side setbacks might be surfaced. You have had the poles in front of the sports centre removed. An estate with no name on the left-hand side beyond some nice trees and parallel to the road 'hides' an undeveloped site from the main road.

On the Rosehill approach the sign at the entrance to the Indorama Wellman International site and the Killian Lodge signs need paint. The latter was rusting. Planting would soften the factory outline between the road and the building. Three large containers were parked on the road (corner) opposite the factory at the town end. Two of these were minus cabs - which appears to point to the fact that they may be parked permanently there. This looked poorly on the entrance to the town. On the right-hand side of this approach road the 50 K pH sign was slightly turned. It was also dirty. Honeysuckle in the hedges on the right-hand side -as the road descends to the town looked well.

On the approach by Ath an Tamhain we noticed a 'headless' pump and some unfinished estates on the approach to the 60 K p h. There was some graffiti on disused neglected premises and there were weeds in that area. Some advertising hoardings were also noted. Last year's adjudicator suggested that all gates on approach roads should be painted in a uniform colour for a possible. We agree.

### **Concluding Remarks:**

Mullagh is a place we had heard about, but never visited before this adjudication visit. The town is located in a lovely setting of undulating countryside. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to come and see a place from where a very famous Irish man became very famous on the continent. Mullagh was probably a small rural village with just a Main Street and some little adjacent development up to a number of years ago. Obviously the village has become a small town growing a lot in the last 10 to 15 years. This brings its own challenges as well as benefits. We hope that all the new residents are contributing to making the town a better place to live in and are work in. We wish you continued success this year and into the future. Go n-eiri libh i rith na blianta atá romhainn!