

Tidy Towns Competition 2019

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Glaslough - Glasloch** Ref: **609**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **346**
Category: **B** Date(s): **03/07/2019**
21/07/2019

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2018	Mark Awarded 2019
Community – Your Planning and Involvement	60	49	50
Streetscape & Public Places	60	46	47
Green Spaces and Landscaping	60	48	48
Nature and Biodiversity in your Locality	50	32	33
Sustainability – Doing more with less	50	21	22
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	67	69
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	37	38
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	38	39
TOTAL MARK	470	338	346

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

Cuireann an moltóir seo fáilte roimh Glaslough- Glasloch páirt a ghlacadh i gComórtas Náisiúnta SuperValu na mBailte Slachtmhara 2019. I wish to start by thanking you for your application which was so expertly put together. Your recommendation re proposed route was only partially adhered to as this adjudicator tends to follow their nose. However, it did provide a very good guide and was used as a check to ensure that the entirety of your village/centre was considered. Congratulations on your significant achievement in winning Irelands Tidiest Village 2018 and your gold medal in Entente Florale Europe 2017 marking your success on both the National and European stage. Last year's adjudicator suggested that your quintessential moto may be 'Developing the community is about developing the social capital' a sentence that emanated in part from yourselves. I agree with the sentiments generally and believe it is certainly apt for Glaslough. If I was to define what I found it would be a 'Community in absolute Unity'. A community with 12 different community-based organisations all working in unity. A community that both welcomes and actively encourages input from all different age groups and sections of society. A community that understands the importance of partnership as is clear with the high level of co-operation with the local authority, other state agencies and the highly collaborative partnership with Castle Leslie Estate. You are a community that has its youth and children both front and centre. Long gone are the days where children were to be seen but not heard. A community that in its pursuit of excellence has developed a suite of strategically important technical documents, plans, proposals and promotional material. These documents have been guided by competent professional experts supported by your community following broad public consultation to ensure that everything is done correctly, nothing is left to chance, and no stone left unturned. What astonishes me more than anything is your committee's ability to analyse and critique the criteria that forms part of each individual category of this competition. Following that you designed, developed and delivered projects that are both unique and very relevant.

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

A sense of place with a strong architectural heritage is what struck me more than anything else when considering the village core. The housing developments on the village green is not out of character and does not detract from main Street in any way, in fact the building line is reinforced as you enter the main approach to the village. The replacement of original windows and doors with modern artificial materials such as uPVC or aluminium has been common. Your Architectural Conservation Area (ACA) report addresses this issue and recommends that the reinstatement of windows to the correct historic design will be encouraged. The almost complete absence of overhead wire-scapes and the provision of a decorative lighting scheme also gives prominence to main street as it establishes the village core. Your ACA report recommends that consideration should be given to extending such works to the area covered by the ACA report. I realise that such works are expensive and disruptive and suggest that it should be considered in the long term.

Towns and Villages need civic spaces for people to congregate and socialise. The diamond provides such a superb space and you cannot visit this space without realising its history. The work of your committee has not detracted from this space in any way but has acknowledged sympathetically its significant history. My predecessor (last year's judge) noted that Castle Leslie is not among the buildings included in the TidyTowns submission presuming that they are on private property. Noting that 'yet it is public'. I am delighted to note the inclusion of the recently completed 21 new room development in this category. I visited the development and found it to be well designed and most appropriate in this setting. I believe it is not possible to consider the village separate from Castle Leslie Estate or vice versa. Both are inherently linked. This was clear to me during my visit where I observed people accessing Castle Leslie Estate from the main street without any obstacles as if the estate is a natural extension of the main street. Main Street and the village core were ablaze with colour. Each building and public lighting column adorned with beautiful floral displays that all combined to great effect. It was noted from your application that the public lighting standards had been recently cleaned and painted but I am not exaggerating when I say that they sparkled from top to bottom in the sunshine. What I was not prepared for in the streetscape and public spaces that I visited was the complete absence of litter. Not one piece was detected. ZERO litter. The refurbishment/repainting of the cast iron seats has given a freshness wherever they have been located. The bright heritage colour chosen works to good effect. Your recently completed ACA report recommends the inclusion of bicycle stands and charging points for cars and moving to quality concrete finishing techniques and away from Macadam and gravel surfacing on footpaths to increase the visual character of the public realm. I agree and when planning future projects consideration should be given to these important recommendations. The Oakland Centre looked fantastic. I admired the pedestrian access gates with an emblem of an Oak tree crafted into the gates. The area presented clean, fresh and well maintained as did the playground. The recently resurfaced car Park serving the National School involved a significant investment and is a big addition to the school. Again, ZERO litter in any form was found in the Car Park and Saint Marys National School. The renovation works done on the Railway station signal box and old laundry was noted and the works done to date are of a high standard. The recently complete TidyTowns Roses Fountain in Tullyree created to mark your significant achievement in this competition and Entante Florale is a substantial landscape feature that will be enjoyed for many generations. I noted and welcome the involvement of local Community Employment participants in its construction. The plinth surrounding the piece constructed from precast concrete units provides a nice seat that will encourage visitors to sit and enjoy the feature. I look forward to seeing the completion of the landscaping works which will assist in softening the piece and integrating it more into the space. I had an opportunity to visit and assess the ongoing walled garden restoration works on Castle Leslie Estate. The herbaceous border was breathtakingly beautiful. It is wonderful to see a renewed effort to restore this valuable resource as an amenity to be enjoyed by all. I wish all involved every success in completing the project in its entirety.

Green Spaces and Landscaping / Spásanna Glasa agus Tírdhreachú:

It is astonishing for a community such as yours to be able to grow up to 7,000 plants annually (something a small commercial operation would be proud of) and to use these plants to satisfy your own needs. This is truly a remarkable achievement. As your committee is aware there is a huge effort involved in growing these plants and massive work in maintaining planters and displays. Here again nothing is left to chance with a detailed maintenance roster put in place to ensure that everything looks its best. The plant mix used in your displays is far from mono but instead incorporates a list of species that benefits our pollinators and has been broadened this year to include edibles. Considering your overall planting schemes throughout the village you have achieved a good balance between container plants and permanent planting. Your efforts are not hit and miss but focused on landscaping for a purpose with specific consideration given to seasonal interest, colour, visual amenity and softening hard areas. I am aware that some technical assistance has been given to your committee in this regard from the dedicated gardening team from Castle Leslie Estate further evidence of the strong link between the estate and the community. Your application included photographic evidence and detail on winter and spring planting which was obviously difficult to evaluate during my visit. But I am happy to conclude that your efforts are not focused on a single season, to the contrary your detailed diligence is 12 months 365 days a year operation. The Oakland gardens containing a bee and butterfly garden, a biodiversity garden and a sensory garden has elements that address three important topics located in a superb location and all three elements presented beautifully on the day of adjudication, as did the Coach Garden, the Station Gates, Caledon Road and Barrack Hill. I acknowledge your efforts to reduce and share maintenance operations, but it must be noted that all these aforementioned schemes are high maintenance schemes that are maintained to an exemplarily standard. The quality of the planting and maintenance standards achieved in all these areas is of the highest degree and in my opinion any of these projects would not look out of place as show gardens at the Chelsea Flower Show or Bloom in the Park. The Tree Survey and Management Plan has provided good guidance for your committee and I note some progress on recommendations made. The plan is detailed and informative and I want to highly commend your committee to have the foresight to invest in getting expert advice to guide your endeavours on this important subject. The assistance and technical support given by the gardening team associated with Castle Leslie Estate regarding tree management is invaluable. A word of caution, the biggest threat to trees in public spaces is mechanical damage by grass cutting equipment and most notably strimmer's. During my visit the use of strimmer's in maintenance operations was witnessed although no significant damage to trees detected. However, a dead tree was observed to the front of Tullyree and consideration should be given to removing this tree. A significant number of Oak trees have been planted on all approach roads to the village which will provide scenic tree lined avenues to the village for future generations. Among the appendices included in your application was the Glaslough Village Green guidelines that gives very good guidance on planting suggestions covering hedges, bedding plants etc. However, no information guidance was given in respect of trees.

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

This category requires the applicant amongst other things to show evidence of the key issues of education

conservation and celebration, evidence of baseline information on local species & habitats and produce Biodiversity and associated Management Plans. On all the above you have achieved significant progress. The range of projects submitted under this category is vast. And due to brevity considerations for this report, it is not possible to address them all individually. But rest assured I have considered each in detail. In summary under the heading of Maintenance (M) 10 number are noted in your application and under the heading of future projects (FP) 4 number noted, astonishingly under the heading New (N) 14 distinct projects/initiatives have been undertaken in the past 12 months. This clearly demonstrates to me the emphasis your community has placed on this important category. Your committee understands that education is key in this category and I want to complement your involvement in the Biodiversity training programme. 15 number participants on the course is a remarkable achievement. The detail given on the course shows you covered a wide range of topics all relevant to the valuable work your committee undertakes. I must comment specifically on the 'Grow My Tree' Pilot Project. This is a superb project on some many fronts. The emphasis of the project on educating children about the importance of growing trees and their responsibility in looking after them along with the sourcing of saplings from Castle Leslie Estate thus ensuring provenance of stock all combines wonderfully. A visit to St Marys NS with the vast array of projects and initiatives clearly demonstrates that the children understand both nature and biodiversity in their locality. The underlying principal of partnership is also obvious in the range of projects submitted under this heading. Of note was the Water Catchment projects and I am happy to conclude that the problem pertaining to poor water quality has been identified in the Glaslough Rivers, Streams and Lakes and the community of Glaslough are now facing the problem head on.

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

Your involvement in the Transition Monaghan Workshop and the regional gathering for climate change focusing on developing a low carbon future by reducing reliance on fossil fuels and dealing with issues presented by Climate Change shows how you can think global and act local. The Greener Glaslough Campaign gives your community a strong branding. But it is more than that noting that the campaign has resulted in tangible successful initiatives such as the reusable coffee cups. Your publication Greener Glaslough 'A guide to Greener Living' is an informative well put together publication that is not left to gather dust. During my visit I noted its free availability at two premises visited. Congratulations on a fine publication. Your waste prevention initiatives involving food production and food waste training, rainwater harvesting, reusable bottle project, no plastic straws and the recently installed water filling station at the Oakland Centre are all excellent initiatives. The comprehensive list of waste prevention measures either planned or undertaken are significant also. Of note was the Making Waves Festival from what I understand it was the first zero waste festival ever held in Ireland. Also, I have come to expect from Glaslough your schools are an integral part of the different initiatives developed and progressed in this important category. The involvement of local businesses is vital and again it is great that Castle Leslie Estate are advancing with recycling training. Your approach in all initiatives and projects developed in this category promotes an ethos of Rethink, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. It is a combination of the results of all these efforts by a dedicated community that demonstrates that you are a community that cares for your environment. Well done.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

An adjudicator's task in identifying litter is normally straight forward. I tend to use terms to describe the litter levels noted from heavily littered to litter free. But as noted previously I was simply not prepared for what I found in Glaslough, absolutely Zero litter which I have never encountered before. This will come as no shock to your committee simply because you have taken a proactive approach to dealing with this issue. Initiatives like area leaders, seasonal clean ups, minute clean up, litter patrols, Junior Tidy Towns litter patrols and the significant involvement that the business community has all combined to result in this astonishing achievement. Other works involving cleaning signs, painting fences and weed control only further enhance the appearance of the village. This list has dealt with the tangible works. But the intangible things that you cannot always put your finger on are also contributing to this category. Such as workshops and training on segregation of waste, anti-litter posters and promoting your message through local radio and social media. The Beautiful Glaslough Competition and awards ceremony now in its third year is a very successful event. I want to sincerely congratulate your 2018 award winners. Bring Centres tend to be littered hot spots and no matter what you do it is difficult to screen these facilities. Both issues were addressed favourably at your facility in the Oakland Centre here, again Zero litter was detected, and the screening of these recycling facilities ensures that they do not detract from the visual amenity at this prominent location. Last year's adjudicator noted 'The visual blemish of the rusty corrugate-iron roof of the old farm building at the bottom of Barrack Hill near the equestrian.' On the 2nd day of adjudication, I noted a tastefully worded information panel at the site giving both a reasonable and plausible explanation on why you have been unable to deal with this site. I want to commend your committee for having the foresight to meet with the owners to address the issue. Some things take time and I believe that to be the case here.

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

Litter control is one of the considerations in this category and again Zero litter was found in any residential streets and housing areas visited. The new picnic area, the new paths and the wheelchair ramps at the Oakland Centre are all important improvements at this profile location. Best of luck with your pending applications to resurface the Tennis and Basketball Courts. The maintenance works on the Diamond, Main Street, Newline, Station Gates, Barrick Hill the Cottages and Tullyree area are all important works and delighted to note that all these maintenance operations are carried out without using any chemicals. This admirable decision increases your workload significantly, so it is a well-informed principled decision and well done to all involved. The works in Tullyree involving new fence and kerbing has progressed well. The landscaping on the village green is attractive and the recent reduction in the height of the hedges is effective and should be retained. The village Green planting Guidelines document provides a good guide for residents but perhaps should be broadened to include trees. The playground in

Ard Banagher was well maintained and individual/private gardens in this and all the estates were noted for the quality of the landscaping works. The planting at the entrance to Ardbanagher was brilliant and of the highest standard with a fantastic mix of perennial and summer floral displays. The recently completed landscaping works at the rear entrance to Ardbanagher was tastefully done and suitable for this location. The new polytunnel and allotments in Ardbanagher is noted as a new project and now complete. This involved a huge amount of work and from what I observed everything was completed to an extremely high standard. I visited Culbanagher Housing Estate and was immediately taken by a beautiful shining specimen Multi stemmed Birch tree to my left-hand side as I entered the estate. Further investigation revealed that a resident had cleaned the tree using soap wipes so not to have a deleterious effect on the tree. Once again Bloom in the Park or the Chelsea Flower Show comes to mind.

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

The resurfacing and building works involving parking bays at the green gates, rebuilding sections of the old famine wall and the fixing of footpaths are all necessary and I note the involvement of the Local Authority. The significant progress your community has made in consulting with the local authority considering village parking and surfacing is in line with the ACA report. It would be brilliant if the project could progress in the Autumn as suggested. The relatively rapid progression of this important project demonstrates the advantage of having strategically important documents such as the ACA report at an advanced stage. Ongoing maintenance works involving repainting all fences gates and lampposts and the washing and painting of signs involves trojan efforts. All approach roads have achieved high maintenance standards with grass verges regularly cut and significant areas set aside for biodiversity. Well done to all involved. The illegal parking issue and subsequent management of road verges has tested your resolve. Your petition notes a community that will be heard and thankfully the kerbing works are now complete. The support of your local Authority has made this possible and this must be acknowledged. Your investment in tree planting on the approach roads should be continued noting that careful siting and subsequent management of trees is important. The recently installed Horse monument on the Monaghan Road is superb. It does endear the visitor and is apt considering the rich equestrian history associated and still to be found in the village and the surrounding area. Here again the support and partnership of Castle Leslie Estate must be acknowledged.

Concluding Remarks:

What I found in Glaslough as noted previously is a Community in Absolute Unity. No stone has been left unturned in your pursuit of excellence. This has been achieved considering your significant inheritance from the past care for the present and strategic plans to guide your efforts in the future. The love that the people of Glaslough have for their home-place is palpable. Well done to all involved.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure to visit Glaslough for the second round adjudication. The village looked extremely well, particularly the Diamond, with its interesting Leslie Memorial Monument surrounded by a cluster of other attractions. The village streetscape is beautifully maintained and expressed with some colourful flower displays while containing a number of interesting, historical artefacts. Residential street buildings have well-considered, muted colour schemes; commercial buildings are expressed in more vibrant colours. Glaslough contains many buildings of architectural preservation importance and they have largely been successfully conserved over the years. However, inappropriate window replacements were observed in a number of locations. It is very encouraging to read that you address this issue in your Architectural Heritage Report.

The wildlife corridor, along the baseline of the boundary wall, from the monument to the wonderfully landscaped castle grounds, is a very attractive feature. This nicely managed area with its educational, information boards adds greatly to the visitor's enjoyment of a village stroll. St. Mary's National School contains a myriad of attractions, including the nicely conceived 'message in a bottle' and horse features, presented on excellently landscaped grounds. The Oakland Recreation Centre, Wildlife Park, Playground and Picnic Area combine to continue this high standard of presentation in the village centre. You are to be congratulated on your even attention to each of the categories in the competition and on the encouragement given to, and engagement with, your youth. The Greener Glaslough Guide is a novel undertaking. Junior litter patrols are now synonymous with the village and the work they do under supervision is excellent. The village has a good stock of housing estates, with a varied character and design layout, ranging from the Village Square and Newline at the centre, to residential areas in the environs, including Lisbanagher, Ardbanagher and Culbanagher; all were visited. The standard of presentation is very high, with some outstanding individual garden displays being admired. The bilingual name signs of the individual housing areas have a nice continuity, set in landscaped areas of a high visual quality. The Glaslough committee displays a very structured approach to your engagement with the Tidy Towns Competition. Your well organised campaign has gained support from a wide variety of similarly interested organisations and bodies. This year's adjudicator has comprehensively commented under each category heading and I fully concur with this report. Well done on your professional partnership approach which is fully deserving of the high position you continue to achieve in the competition.