

Tidy Towns Competition 2015

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Glaslough** Ref: **609**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **320**
Category: **B** Date(s): **09/07/2015**
02/08/2015

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2014	Mark Awarded 2015
Community Involvement & Planning	60	47	47
Built Environment and Streetscape	50	44	45
Landscaping and Open Spaces	50	42	44
Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities	50	30	29
Sustainable Waste and Resource Management	50	16	18
Tidiness and Litter Control	90	65	65
Residential Streets & Housing Areas	50	34	35
Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes	50	37	37
TOTAL MARK	450	315	320

Community Involvement & Planning / Rannpháirtíocht an Phobail & Pleanáil:

Welcome Glaslough to the 2015 Tidy Towns competition on what is your 50th year of participation. This is a hugely impressive record for an incredibly impressive village! We were amazed at the level of community involvement in Glaslough with a total of 50 designated committee members and an additional 50 members who volunteer to work on your projects. It is pleasing to read that you enjoy working with other Community and voluntary groups in your village (including Friends of Glaslough, the Glaslough Musical Society and the Glaslough Development Association) and that they provide help in different forms – from direct support to financial assistance. You have formed good links with a variety of agencies and bodies such as Monaghan County Council, the Community Employment Scheme and Cavan / Monaghan Leader among others and we urge to continue with these successful relationships and perhaps build a few more in the years ahead. It is great to see that local businesses are fully supportive of your efforts as there seems likely doubt that they are hugely appreciate of the excellent work that you do for your village. Given the numbers who lend you a hand, we are not surprised to see that you have an excellent communication strategy based on both traditional and digital media. Congratulations on the recent feature on TV and we are pleased to hear that you were satisfied with the publicity that it generated. Well done on maintaining strong links with the schools and it is great to see that the schoolchildren have been involved in a range of tidy towns projects including litter picks, biodiversity workshops and tree planting. We were delighted to read that a junior tidy town committee was just formed one year ago and that it currently boasts a membership of 25 and that Foróige are also actively involved. Whilst we note that both are closely involved in a range of different projects, we urge you to delegate full responsibility to them for some projects – particularly ones where the original idea has come from them. This will bring variety to your projects and foster a sense of ownership of the projects among the younger generation. Thank you for your entry form and the map as the summary of the projects was very helpful. However, while the application form was beautifully prepared and no doubt represented a significant amount of work, at approximately 130 pages and an attached appendix of another 130 pages (or so!), it cannot be described as concise. It would be appreciated if your entry form was overhauled for next year in order to reduce the amount of detail provided. We are confident that Glaslough speaks for itself and weighty entry documents are not necessary. Thank you also for your action plan which was read with interest.

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

The historic and planned village of Glaslough is a delight to visit as there are so many aspects to admire. Your adjudicator has a firm interest in historic buildings and structures and your village proved to be fascinating. The wonderful and intact natural stone walls that can be found on the Monaghan approach road into the village provided a comforting uniformity that is seldom seen in either Monaghan or other counties in Ireland. We loved the terraces of original and well maintained buildings on Main Street that provide a most attractive and distinctive streetscape and we particularly liked the many individual buildings of historic and architectural significance. They include the Church

of Ireland Parochial Hall, the Coach House Bar and the Old Bar – all of which looked very well. Not surprisingly, Castle Leslie and its entrance gates and grounds are simply stunning and it is a wonderful asset for your village. We also liked the features to be seen in the Diamond in the centre of the village such as the fountain with the statue to Charles Powell Leslie MP and the committee is commended on its imaginative use of the charming old phone box. We would also like to commend business owners on the standard of presentation of their business premises with the previously mentioned Coach House Bar and Old Bar both standing out, but others also impressed. The Daybreak shop looked quite well as did Castle View Antiques while the new shopfront of Glaslough Chocolates is most attractive and a credit to this establishment. The cartwheel seat is also a nice touch. The School and the Oakland Community both looked smart with their fresh coats of paint. However, the commercial building at the junction of the Main Street and Barrack Hill will need some freshening up for 2016. The committee is commended on the many fine projects undertaken under this category for 2015. The regular maintenance of the derelict home is a worthwhile task and we are pleased to read that the natural stone walls are continuously maintained. We admired the signal cabin and we were pleased to see that the lumber trolley was in place on the second row of tracks during adjudication. The old cart at the horse pond, complete with nasturtiums, provided a burst of summer colour on Barrack Hill while the new solar powered fountain at Tullyree is a nice addition to this very attractive residential area.

Landscaping and Open Spaces / Tírdhreachú agus Spásanna Oscailte:

We enjoyed viewing the numerous planting schemes that were visible in Glaslough during adjudication and we were delighted to see that the standard of landscaping was consistently high throughout the village. While it is not possible to review all schemes in this short report, a number stood out. The lovely circular natural stone bed outside the school is a fantastic piece of work and we particularly liked the mix of summer flowering plants and perennials to be seen here. The landscaping on the approach road from Monaghan is very impressive indeed with tiered timber planters providing nice colour to the approach. The planting at the Tullyree estate was considered to be exceptional as its newly constructed fountain, colourful and varied landscaping, trimmed grass and trees all provide for a most impressive central amenity space and it is clear that the committee, residents and the community employment scheme has undertaken a tremendous amount of work to achieve this. The planting at the adjacent New Houses achieved a similar standard, while the bike planter at the village green opposite was considered to be an unusual but distinctive feature. The committee is commended on its use of landscaping and planters to enhance some of the key features in the village with the decorative and ornate planters in the Diamond bringing colour and additional interest to this lovely central space. We admired the many hanging baskets that could be found on the New Line Road while Barrack Hill (with planting at the horse pond and at the new cart) also looking very well. Colourful planting was also seen at the signal box and we liked the use of planting at the railway themed feature opposite (at the junction of the Emyvale Road). The contribution of businesses (particularly Glaslough Chocolates, the Old Coach House and the Community Centre) to this category is acknowledged as many provided bright and colourful window boxes or flower baskets to the front of their premises. The Committee is also commended on its use of seasonal and perennial planting in the residential estates and the maintenance of verges and roadside areas throughout the village.

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

It is noted from your entry form that a number of very good projects have been undertaken for 2015 and they include; a continuation of the tree planting programme with 20 trees (comprising ash, oak, hornbeam and apple) planted, the continued planting of wildflowers in the biodiversity garden (which is an excellent initiative), maintaining the willow structure, organising a bee, butterfly and bird workshop and running an eco summer for school children. The information walks around the Wetlands, the wildlife trail and Hoeys Trail. However, we were disappointed to note that during the adjudication on July 9th, hedge cutting was taking place on the Monaghan approach road close to the school (and Hoeys Trail) and furthermore, this is one of your designated wildlife trails which features signage on the important contribution that hedgerows make to wildlife. Given that hedge cutting is not permissible under the wildlife Acts between March 1st and August 31st each year and we have no option in this instance but to deduct a mark from this category. As the tidy towns committee has broad based support in Glaslough, you are urged to be vigilant against harmful (and illegal) hedgecutting as this legislation is in place to protect nesting birds and wildlife.

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

We were pleased to note that a host of projects are presented under this category for 2015. It is great to see that the committee is undertaking projects that emphasise waste minimisation and elimination such as rainwater harvesting with a water barrel observed at the Oakland Community centre. We wondered if perhaps additional barrels are needed? Could barrels be used to capture rain water from other community buildings in your village – such as the parochial hall? Perhaps your committee could monitor the water requirements for your existing planters and hanging baskets and plan water harvesting accordingly. We would also encourage you to use recycled materials where possible for water butts. Well done also on making your plant food from comfrey leaves – this seems to be a very innovative approach to making plant food. We also enjoyed visiting the upcycling garden and observing the many interesting planters that have been produced by using end of life items. We were delighted to read that the waste prevention tips posted on social media, twitter and your website are growing in popularity and we wondered if it is time for you to conduct a survey of residents to see how many are implementing your tips and engaging in waste minimization and elimination? This could be done with the help of the schoolchildren (by asking them to request that their parents participate) or by using social media or your website. We were delighted to hear that the committee is promoting sustainable transport and that the school engage in WOW (Walk on Wednesday) and COW days. We would also be interested to hear of how many of your 50 strong committee has switched from car transport to more sustainable means.

Tidiness and Litter Control / Slachtmhaireacht agus Rialú Bruscair:

This is normally a strong category and 2015 proved to be no exception with the vast majority of areas in Glaslough appearing litter free and clean. The only exceptions to this were on New Line Road where 2 items of litter could be seen and one item could be spotted in the biodiversity garden. This good performance is clearly the result of all the hard work regularly undertaken by the committee and your large band of volunteers. It is noted that your litter management plan has been revised and that it now includes areas outside the 50 kmph boundaries (such as the Gallops). While the committee is welcome to do this, don't forget that adjudication only takes place within the 50 kmph speed limit area and not outside it. Well done also on your hard work on tidiness with an impressive performance observed with respect to weed removal, verge trimming and signage maintenance – the vast majority of areas inside the village were very neat and tidy as a result. Some small improvements are possible. At the community centre, the pink recycling bin will need to be power washed for 2016 as it was very untidy looking while the railings and boundary wall behind the bin receptables were in poor condition and do not appear to have had attention in quite some time. The pedestrian gate leading into what appears to be a water pump house (beside the community centre) will need to be painted for next year and an untidy sub station could be viewed outside the hair studio. On Barrack Hill, some of the boundary treatments and gates are untidy looking. Could planting be considered to screen unattractive fencing?

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

The standard of presentation of housing areas in Glaslough was generally very high. It is considered that Tullyree sets the benchmark standard with its lovely green areas, mature trees and diverse planting. The new fountain feature and the gazebo also looked very well. The New Houses adjacent are also very impressive and they are commended on their excellent work on landscaping and maintenance. It is pleasing to see that the estates at the opposite end of the village are also improving. Well done on providing a new garden area in Culbanagher and the green area adjacent to the entrance into the estate looked very well. The new summer seat in Ardbanagher is also a lovely idea. However, a fenced off aerial that is located close to the steps leading down to Barrack Hill is very untidy looking as the base of this structure has been used to discard unwanted items.

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

The approach roads into Glaslough all achieved a high standard in terms of their appearance. A key feature of all the approach roads is the prevalence of natural hedgerow boundaries. Hedgerows are a wonderful boundary treatment as they are visually pleasing and they are a particularly important habitat that act as source of food and shelter for wildlife and birdlife. We applaud the decision of all in Glaslough to retain these hedgerows as the primary form of boundary treatment in your village but we must insist that the provisions of the Wildlife Acts with respect to hedge trimming are observed in all maintenance programmes (by the Committee, the Council and private land owners). The landscaping on the Monaghan approach road and the wildflowers on the Emyvale Road were admired as both looked very well during adjudication.

Concluding Remarks:

Glaslough is commended on a very good performance in the 2015 Tidy Towns Competition. However, we would very much appreciate your help and your vigilance in ensuring that all future maintenance of your wonderful hedgerows is undertaken in a responsible manner and in accordance with the Wildlife Acts.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a great pleasure for your second Round adjudicator to visit the most attractive village of Glaslough. However, as noted by the first round adjudicator the documentation that you provided with your entry this year was most comprehensive if rather long. The major document that formed the core of your entry must have taken a considerable time to prepare and while this dedication is acknowledged, a document of this length is not necessary and document length does not bear any relationship to the allocation of marks. What is essential is that the entry shows clearly and concisely the new work undertaken for the year at hand. In this regard the laminated plan with the most excellent hand drawn map was a very useful tool given the wet weather encountered during the second round adjudication. One of the main strengths of the community is the high standard of presentation of your residential streets and housing areas, given that many of your home and estates line the Main Street, so well done to all for all the efforts involved to reach the standards seen on the day. The communal areas at Lisbannagher with its impressive staircase were admired and we loved the tree swing at Tullyree. A little amount of recent litter was noted near the café near Ambletown cottages. A bin may be required here. In fact this adjudicator felt that an overall review of the quantity and placement of bins in the village may be required. For example when standing at the junction of Main Street and New line at the fountain no fewer than 4 bins were noted. While all were clean and well maintained, are all required? And at the shop where a bin would be most useful, there was no bin. Although one is placed a little way across the road. Some villages are looking at policies to reduce bins in their villages. In fact centres such as Abbyshrule have implemented a no-bin strategy in order to educate people to bring their rubbish home. Likewise is the bin at the entrance to Tullyree required in such a residential area? Removing bins reduces street clutter and the burden of work on the committee. Consider this as a strategy for next year. Elsewhere the village was spotless on second adjudication day. Approaches were good with hedges and boundary walls well maintained although take note of hedge cutting seasons as discussed in the first adjudicators report. Your school was beautifully presented but perhaps the boundary to the car park could be planted to soften the edges somewhat. I fully endorse the comments and report of this year's first round adjudicator and congratulate your committee on an all-round professional approach. Glaslough illustrates a huge community commitment to the Tidy Towns agenda.