

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Coolagown** Ref: **649**
County: **Cork(North)** Mark: **314**
Category: **A** Date(s): **17/06/2013**
30/07/2013

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	43	43
The Built Environment	50	34	34
Landscaping	50	44	45
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	40	41
Litter Control	50	39	41
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	14	15
Tidiness	30	20	20
Residential Areas	40	28	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38	38
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	400	309	314

Overall Development Approach:

Céad míle fáilte to Coolagown Development Group to the National SuperValu TidyTowns competition for 2013. The adjudicator feels a sense of anticipation about visiting this village as a result of your many achievements in recent years and from visiting your website. Thank you for your submission which included entry form, the 'official' map, the endearing artwork maps of the local children, the paper clippings, the photos, your 3 year plan and other supplementary material. All work is beautifully presented. This adjudicator feels that you will have to decide what material is essential to the adjudicator and ask yourselves if you are including material that may impede the work of the adjudicator. It appears that TidyTowns is not confined to a core of enthusiasts in Coolagown but that TidyTowns is a community affair. That community reaches out to all of the major agencies that can assist you in a meaningful way. You acknowledge your indebtedness to so many by mentioning them in your submission, for instance the farmers who supply tractors, trailers or topsoil and the Fás workers whose stone building is now an artform. The local school is at the core of your TidyTowns work and the pupils are acknowledged by the inclusion of their map work. The sense of pride and community spirit you mention is evident in all you undertake. You paid heed to the advice of last year's adjudicator regarding your 3 Year Plan and the result is a blueprint covering all sections of the competition. For next year note the caution of this year's report!

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator does not intend to delay you with meanderings of ráiméis that you have heard before because your plans are already in full swing in each of the ten categories. Any buildings that might detract from the appearance of the village are also enterprises that bring employment and prosperity to the area. But it is the creativity in countering any negative visual effects of these enterprises and the effectiveness of this creativity that merits credit. The shrub growing, tree growing at McDonnells is an example. Then all of the attractions across the road deflect the attention away from what might not be Wordworthian. The sting: the adjudicator felt that a rub of domestos would remove any mould there is on the yellow paint of the school and improve its appearance.

Landscaping:

It is the belief of the adjudicator that every tree, plant, shrub and flower that grows in Coolagown has been planned. And it works. Mind you the native hedges that would grow in the wild are accommodated also. There is a sense of perfection that is almost eerie in the landscaping presentation but it is beautiful. The adjudicator is

pleased to read that you are aware of the significant work load you are bequeathing to the next generations of TidyTowns Committees who have to maintain the existing planting and keep up the appearance of the various stone projects that you have set out. You mention the unifying effect of a pattern of colour in planting. The unifying effect of the horseshoe achieves this unifying effect in a meaningful manner that is consistent with your heritage, the importance of horse and smith in Coolagown. The smith could not have existed without the horse. This adjudicator would examine means of stressing the importance of the horse in your traditions. The adjudicator felt that you linked up very cleverly with the distant school by trimming the roadside verges along that road.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It is your awareness of the variety of wildlife that makes the immediate impact. Then as one gets to know Coolagown the provision of 'amenities' for that rich wildlife impresses. The adjudicator did not find the owl boxes at either of the locations but trusts you fully. But the adjudicator did find and experience the life space locations on the main road, these spaces providing refuge not just for the insects and invertebrates but also for the passer by. As a decoration the vehicle barriers are worthy of a note. Kilbarry Wood is a wonderful amenity, a beautiful walk, away from the traffic affording divine views of the surrounding countryside and indeed of the village itself and especially of the Church. One appreciates that camouflage work that has been achieved at McDonnells from one of the viewing areas, what could have been an eyesore has become a beautifully landscaped area rich in vegetation. The Nature Trail for Soul and Spirit adds an extra layer to the experience of travelling throughout the village but especially when combined with the wildlife experience.

Litter Control:

We are all reminded on a number of occasions by your poetic entreaty that we must not litter. Your litter awareness projects combined with the hard grind of litter picks is paying dividends. The Bring Centre is free of all litter and dirt. You link the concept of reducing litter with 'Reduce, Reuse, Recycle' in a very clever manner. While you may be trimming the grass verge on the main road one expects that your litter patrols do not encompass that stretch of roadway that leads to the school.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

The influence of TidyTowns on the community in Coolagown can be gauged from the willingness of the householders to cooperate with the plans 'to make savings' in domestic use of energy. Your status as a TidyTowns group with an interest in resource management is evident from being chosen by Cork County Council in their energy saving pilot scheme. Involvement in this scheme not only creates a greater awareness regarding domestic energy consumption in Coolagown, it also provides a manual of good practice. Every house in the country should be provided with a free electricity monitor. But would every householder be willing to carry out the tasks that the people of Coolagown set about on an almost daily basis. The adjudicator is awarding an extra mark in this category, not to address your disappointment with your present mark but because of the dynamic approach you have to this category and because of your success in involving so many of the householders in your plans and activities to reduce waste and to manage hard pressed resources. The work of 2011 is now part of the history of your work under waste minimisation. Well done to all involved in achieving your second Green Flag.

Tidiness:

It is evident that you are fully aware that tidiness can only be achieved with constant surveillance and with constant cleaning. Strimming and mowing are two other chores necessary to create a tidy setting. Thus you achieve your results. There are no footpaths in the approaches to the village. One presumes that these footpaths have been sacrificed in order to allow for the landscaping and the neat grass verges. The adjudicator felt that there could be a threat from traffic in some spots on the way towards McDonnells.

Residential Areas:

Were it not for the unswerving support of the residents of all types of house in Coolagown then your task in creating the desired effect would be impossible to realise. The residents must be fully on board in the upkeep of their houses, in the colour paint they choose, in their front garden design and in the front boundary. The adjudicator could not find exceptions and felt that residents deserve a night out from your committee for their cooperation. The adjudicator loved the turn table, unembellished with planting except for the one tree in The Paddocks.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

You do not confine your activities to the length of road between speed limits and the adjudicator applauds you for this. Your constituency should not exclude all of those who contribute to the appearance and sustainability of the general area. So you encompass a lot more, and correspondingly undertake a lot more work, than if you confined yourselves to the speed limit signs. The fruit of your labours can be seen for what seems like miles. This involves work on road verges, on hedging, involves awareness of the condition of roads and gates. All well served by you and your community.

General Impression:

The overriding impression that this adjudicator has got of Coolagown is of a community striving to 'make the village an increasingly more pleasurable place in which to live and work'. That latter is a noble ideal. It is also a major achievement to have the support of your community. Not only is that support tangible from the reading of your submission but it is also obvious from driving around the haven of experiences that may now be commonplace to you but to the visitor the experience on every yard of the journey is akin to turning the pages of a thriller to find out what happens next.

Second Round Adjudication:

Coolagown is living proof of the old adage 'small is beautiful'. This is a tiny community which is totally united and focused on creating a superb and memorable display. It is some years since this adjudicator had the pleasure of visiting your centre; back then my memory is of a centre which had done everything it could possibly do to project itself appropriately. My visit this year has shown how much further you have progressed with style, panache, creativity and a skilful use of your resources. It is an accumulation of minor things which collectively contribute to the overall stunning impact of Coolagown. The wild flowers outside the church; the fine monument to the culture of the blacksmith; your success in securing agreement from all landowners to use the horseshoe motif on field gates. These are achievements which speak to the totality of support that has been achieved.

The tall hedges on the tree lined approach with the impeccable painted white bar closing the view is a real joy. Throughout the village and on its approach roads the hedgerows and verges are suitable but not excessively cut back. There is a masterful linkage between your presentation and a deep seated, well thought out philosophy perhaps best encapsulated in the expression, "what is life if full of care we haven't time to stand and stare", featured on one of the stops on the Nature Trail for Soul and Spirit. The incorporation of the children's challenge on each of these signs helps to inculcate an interest in, awareness of and appreciation for nature and its many mysteries by the rising generation. The colourful and meaningful anti-litter signs developed from a concept by Kilmagner National School pupils underscore your success.

The Bring Bank with its location, layout and signage is a joy. Fittingly your expertise has been acknowledged in Entente Florale by winning a gold medal in Rogaska Slovenia in 2011. It is no wonder that you have been a gold medal winner for the last 5 years as increasing recognition comes your way. The Cork flag, one of three at the church, is becoming tattered and should be replaced. The delightful sign overlooking the valley at the nature walk car park would benefit from simple washing. As I leave the centre I am left with a deep sense of sadness at the number of cars that shoot by on the busy N72 without being aware of your existence and the strength of your message. Could you enter into discussion with Cork Co. Co. with a view to appropriately flagging your existence by suitable signage on this roadway. Congratulations and deep thanks to all involved in this incredible manifestation of community pride and successful collective action.