

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Scotstown**

Ref: **542**

County: **Monaghan**

Mark: **246**

Category: **B**

Date(s): **24/06/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	29	29
The Built Environment	50	30	30
Landscaping	50	33	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27	29
Litter Control	50	35	35
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	8	9
Tidiness	30	15	16
Residential Areas	40	28	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27	28
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	239	246

Overall Development Approach:

Your adjudicator would like to welcome back Scotstown to the 2013 National TidyTown's Competition. Thank you for the detailed entry form, before and after photographs and the submission of your three-year plan. The plan is a useful document as it helps you see what you have achieved and also helps focus on long-term aims. In this plan you do not have any community groups assigned to specific actions. It is suggested that you circulate this and then different groups may volunteer to carry out specific tasks. For example, the Montessori pupils may help to collect seeds from trees (oaks, conkers) and pass these to active age to help to grow for future planting in the village.

You work well with schools and have a great number of volunteers for your clean-ups – well done to all involved. You mention the success in getting the roads re-surfaced and the resulting higher number of cyclist in the area – even on a Monday morning your adjudicator can verify this as numbers of cyclists were seen even then!

The Built Environment:

Tremendous work has been carried out at the house at the bottom of the village beside Cassidy's garage in clearing the vegetation around it, and painting the walls. The focus of work on strategic buildings is very important and thus it was tremendous to see the great work on the barn which was gleaming at the top of the village. The church and most other commercial and public buildings were very well presented. McCague's bar looked well and the work on the barn behind lifts this whole area.

The hall needs some pointing/finishing as some of the paint is flaking off in placed. There is great continuity of pavements through the village bar two places. You can safely get to the football pitch but it seems to be a free for all to get from there to the church via the community centre. The extension of pavement here would be a safety feature for pedestrian but also help enhance the streetscape in front of the community centre. The other place is detailed in the 'roads' section of this report. Some of the buildings have older signs now in place - the removal of which should be considered such as the shell garage sign. Hanging baskets and planters looked well at Henry's bar and Moody's though both premises need a little touch up of paint.

Landscaping:

The flower tower and numerous planters were admired. The new sandstone walls and beds at the main road and at St Dympna's terrace were admired. There are numerous planters through the village. Most of these are planted with flowers that would have to be replaced every year. The competition is pushing towards the more sustainable planting of shrubs and plants that provide year-round structure. You should consider this in future planting schemes and how you propose to water all the planters? Maybe some water butts could be installed in and around the village green and would also gain you marks in the sustainable waste and resource management category of the competition.

As you say you do have a lot of green areas to manage but you do this very well and the Millennium gardens were visited and enjoyed and appear to have just the right amount of management. A certain vantage points looking across Scotstown, you can see many lovely mature trees including copper beech and horse chestnuts – this is a rare sight in many other parts of Ireland and should be nurtured. The growth under the trees on the avenue was not very heavily mowed which was good to see.

The village green looked well with maturing trees, village pump and the number of different styled seats and benches providing views down the village – all of which were being used on adjudication day!" Landscaped beds at the GAA pitch, behind the entrance, also looked very well. However, it was felt that the steel fencing here could be painted to enhance this area. Likewise there are nice blue planters throughout the village, and at the school. Perhaps the railings at the school could be so painted also to carry through this continuity of colour?

The factory shop opposite the school looked well and there was a nice climber growing up the walls here softening the look of this building, and providing food and shelter for wildlife. The extension works to the school were near completion and amazingly the Garda Station still looked well despite the construction vehicles all around it here.

PS – if you are looking for your shears and strimmers – you left them under the bushes by the stream on the Monaghan road!

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your millennium gardens are a wonderful facility and should be highly commended for this work, and it has great potential. You could erect a myriad of bird boxes and bat boxes here and run wildlife talks and walks for the whole community here and that would gain many marks through raising awareness of the local wildlife here. Perhaps there are some already erected but the foliage was so thick it was not noticed!

The standard LEADER wildlife sign here also needs a clean. The pond area was lovely with yellow iris growing here. BUT be warned as you have giant hogweed growing here. This invasive species causes very nasty skin rashes and should be removed chemically – ask your biodiversity officer or check out www.invasivespecies.com for details.

Litter Control:

It is great to read that you are finding less and less litter on approach roads and that your efforts are paying off – well done. The retired walkers who pick up litter daily should be highly commended. Your adjudicator read with delight of the work you do with the proprietor of the local chip shop who clears away any such litter. Often fast food litter can be a problem but none was obvious on adjudication day.

A small amount of litter was noticed by the bottle banks at the bank of the church –some boxes had been stashed behind here. But this was not too bad. Your adjudicator did feel however that the bottle banks, and the sign from Monaghan County Council here could all do with a gentle wash with a power hose.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

Congratulations in organising the poster competition – the winners were admired in Scotstown pharmacy. This is as outlined in your long-term plan so well done on achieving these actions. The posters display many of the core messages of recycling and waste reduction. You could also consider organising a community workshop on eg. Composting or host a 'Bring & Buy' sale – all of which would help gain marks in this category of the competition. Your adjudicator was surprised to count 6 clothing banks in the community!

Tidiness:

Well done in your work with the County Council with regard to both the repair of the broken water pipe & associated pavement repairs; and the clearance of the gully at the village green . Some old stones had been dumped at the back of the shed by the bottle banks. The wall along mass pass has obvious had some graffiti before - and has great potential. Perhaps a youth project could be to provide a mural along this length? The metal door to the shed by the bottle bank should be painted, as should the old wrought iron gate to the mass pass field. Likewise the green metal gate to the playing field could also be enhanced with a coat of paint.

Gates to both the old and new cemetery from the avenue both need to look as good as the main gates at the back of the Church.

Residential Areas:

There is a grey home on the square with a vibrantly bright yellow door that lifted this whole area – this looked lovely!

Your adjudicator was pleased to learn of the meeting with Monaghan County Council and the residents' association of The Ferns. Keep up the efforts on this as the unfinished premises at the end is deteriorating and to be blunt looked very poor when viewed from the Smithborough Road. There are nice trees here on the village green. Perhaps a native hedge could be planted in front of the road-side fence to enhance the safety of children as a barrier to the road, and provide shelter and food for wildlife?

Village Court was inspected, all premises were occupied, clean and tidy and no weeds were noted so well done to all here. Your adjudicator would ask that bi-lingual estate name signs considered for this estate and for Gola crest estate as there are currently none for each area.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The first premises that you arrive approaching from the Knockatallon Road is a rusting, metal shed. But your adjudicator believed you have contacted the owner about this and hopefully this will be addressed soon. There were some nice wild roses growing on the wall at the millennium garden end of mass pass. Rhododendron here is beginning to block the stile here – as this is a very difficult species to manage it is suggested that you simply pull this out and shred it. The other area with no pavement is arriving into the village from the new estates on the Roslea road. Pavements have been placed here in front of the estates – that go nowhere!

There is a surprising amount of lorry traffic through Scotstown hence your adjudicator's concern regarding pavements for the residents of the village as detailed elsewhere in this report.

General Impression:

It was good to visit Scotstown. Arriving from Emyvale – it was more extrapolated than originally thought –the church being quite far from the resident estates. But you are working hard to provide continuity with planting schemes and pavements. Scotman's has a lovely central focus to the village and some great maturing trees suitable to the rolling hills of North Monaghan. It was a lovely place to adjudicate and well done on your hard efforts.