

Tidy Towns Competition 2013

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Galway City Centre** Ref: **1340**
County: **Galway** Mark: **275**
Category: **H** Date(s): **02/07/2013**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2012	Mark Awarded 2013
Overall Development Approach	50	42	43
The Built Environment	50	39	41
Landscaping	50	38	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28	29
Litter Control	50	26	26
Sustainable Waste And Resource Management	20	9	9
Tidiness	30	17	17
Residential Areas	40	30	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33	33
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	400	269	275

Overall Development Approach:

We are delighted to welcome Galway City Centre to the 2013 TidyTowns competition and it is great to see Galway City taking part. We note from your application form that 2013 represents a more community led approach from the tidytowns group with a lesser role for Galway City Council and you are commended on this new approach as there's little doubt that this could lead to a different emphasis in the projects that are selected, and perhaps a greater sense of ownership among the community of the work of the tidytowns committee. However, we would strongly encourage you to maintain strong links with Galway City Council as their co-operation and assistance is vital if improvements are to take place across all tidytowns categories. You are also commended on your approach to working with other statutory agencies and bodies and many are identified in your entry form. We are delighted to see that you have taken a very proactive approach to involving other voluntary groups in your projects. Your adopt a spot initiative is fantastic and it is considered to be essential in order for real and lasting improvements to be made in the City of Galway. We were pleased to read that different schools are involved in your projects and this is strongly encouraged as raising environmental awareness is a key objective of the competition. Thank you for your completed entry form, which was most helpful and particularly the map, which proved invaluable during adjudication. The presentation of the application is also to be commended as the single volume was very user-friendly when walking around Galway city centre. Well done on compiling a wish list with local traders and residents as this is an excellent way of identifying priority projects. We are pleased to note that the vast majority of the projects identified have already been completed. Thank you for your extracts from Galway city biodiversity website and this is an excellent means of raising awareness of biodiversity and capturing feedback. The habitat inventory was also read with interest. It is heartening to see that the committee is helping to promote Galway as a bilingual city. Your submitted shopfront and signage design guidelines document was also considered. Like the adjudicator in 2012, we were interested in seeing a tidytowns action plan. It is strongly recommended that the committee prepare an action plan which identifies projects under each of the tidytown categories for the next 3 to 5 years.

The Built Environment:

The adjudicator was delighted at the opportunity to return to Galway city and experience the excellent work of the tidytowns committee at first hand. As always, Galway did not disappoint. The city centre was most impressive with Eyre Square looking vibrant and colourful with its many tiered planters, smart seating areas and lovely features such as the Browne Doorway and the fountain to admire. The nearby streets such as William Street,

Eglinton Street and Williamsgate Street bustled with activity and many fine premises such as Hollands, Brown Thomas and the contemporary Corbett Court could be seen. On nearby Eyre Street, the Hole in the Wall pub and McSwiggans both looked very well. Further on, a host of very well presented premises could be seen on the charming narrow streets of Quay Street, Cross Street, Kirwans Lane and High Street where the wide pavements and pedestrian zones provide for a more relaxed pace. Many lovely buildings impressed with a number standing out such as Ui Neachtains (with its Irish signage and colourful hanging baskets), the Revive Café (a lovely period building with chamfered corner entrance) and Busker Brownes. However, newer buildings such as McDonaghs also looked well. It was lovely to discover some historical buildings in the midst of the central shopping area, with Lynchs Castle (although covered in scaffolding) and the wonderful Church of St. Nicholas catching the eye. We particularly liked Mayoralty House and it is heartening to see older buildings like the Cathedral Building in active use. We were also taken with some of the rather unusual buildings which add further interest and they include the Claddagh Jewellers with its colourful mural that dominates the building, while the Holland and Barrett premises also draws attention. Many other commercial premises could be spotted further out such as Monroes (on Dominick Street) and the Western Hotel (Prospect Hill). We note from your entry form that a walking tour is proposed and this is an excellent idea as the City has so many buildings and places to see - the biggest difficulty is likely to be fitting everything in! Highlights for the adjudicator include the Courthouse, which looked fantastic on adjudication day while the magnificent Cathedral was also admired. In Claddagh, we loved the Museum Building, while the Dominicans Church also looked very well. The Galway Rovers AFC building on the quay is a most original and eye catching structure while the lovely buildings at the Crescent caught the attention of the adjudicator. Aside from the wonderful buildings, interesting features such as the Claddagh Icon and the many statues in the City (such as Liam O'Maoilisa, An tAthair Tomas De Búrca and the Equality Emerging statue) make a very positive contribution. The murals that could be observed such as Claddagh Jewellers and Bierhaus on Pump Lane provide a bold reminder of the strong connection to the arts in Galway City. We also enjoyed the river wall as Bruach na Coiribe is a lovely amenity for the city. We were delighted to read that so many projects are either ongoing or are planned. The work of Galway Civic Trust on promoting and conserving the remaining parts of the Medieval walls of the city is highly commendable. It is great to see that the Mutton Island Lighthouse Museum and a replacement Fisheries Tower Bridge have been completed. It is noted that the tidy towns committee is working hard to improve shopfront and residences in the city that are in a deteriorating condition, by contacting owners directly or with the aid of Galway City Council. We also note that some derelict sites have been painted to improve their appearance. We were delighted to read about your space invaders as this seems to be a great way of showcasing vacant properties and for displaying material and artwork from the arts and fringe festivals. The committee is to be commended for making submissions on ongoing issues such as the city conservation management and interpretation plan and the shopfront and signage design guidance.

Landscaping:

Many attractive landscaping schemes were observed on adjudication day. The planting at the Joyce roundabout was admired as it achieved a good diversity of colour and plant species and it serves as a good introduction on this important entrance to Galway City. The bright red planters that line the central median of the Headford Road are also quite nice, adding colour to this approach. Many excellent examples were seen in Eyre Square with its combination of planters with cascading flowers of different colours and attractive raised stone beds with a mix of perennials and flowering plants. The large grey planters (and their built in seats) with trees and flowers that line the Square also looked well. A highlight for the adjudicator was the excellent planting in the riverside park in front of the Cathedral (between the Bridge and the Salmon Weir) which provided a blaze of summer colours and a very good diversity of species. The landscaping schemes in Claddagh were also impressive with the grassed and planted areas flanking the An tAthair De Búrca statue looking very well, while colourful landscaped beds could also be observed at the entrance to the bridge. The planters that lined the urban space in front of the museum were also very nice and helped to enhance this area. It was noted that some beds close to the Galway Rovers AFC building on the coastal walk were bare and were awaiting planting. In addition, some rather untidy and weedy beds could be spotted opposite Claddagh Fire Station and beside the Crane Bar. Attractive planting and landscaping schemes were observed at some businesses and commercial premises and they include; the entrance to the Galway Retail Park, which looked very well while the planted boxes and baskets outside McDonaghs, Ui Neachtains, Buskers Browns, Tigh Coili, O'Maile and St Patricks Boys Primary School helped to enhance these buildings. We were delighted to read that the focus of the tidy towns committee is on planting for year-round effect, managing open spaces and the maintenance of planting areas, road side verges and grass strips. The 'Adapt a Spot' project where street leaders are appointed sounds like an excellent initiative and we would love to hear more about it in 2014. It is heartening to read that the Mens Shed project are making boxes for the tidy towns committee and we would encourage them to use recycled materials where possible. We were delighted to read that the friends of Terryland Park and Galway Conservation Volunteers took part in the 1 million trees project and provided new trees in the Terryland Forest and Cappagh Park. It is further noted that a number of new projects are planned under this category and we commend you on your proposal to plant Ivy on walls that are prone to graffiti.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Thank you for your copy of the Galway City Draft Biodiversity Action Plan which was read with interest. The document clearly demonstrates that there is a very rich diversity of habitats in and around Galway city with 58 habitats identified. It is further noted that a significant number of these habitats have been identified as being of high biodiversity value. However, while some detail is given in your entry form to the flora and fauna that occupy these diverse habitats, no survey appears to have been prepared? Are there plans to conduct a survey on any of these habitats? A survey would be most desirable as it would provide baseline information of the diversity of flora and fauna that are present and it could be used to prepare interpretive signage. The survey could also be

made available on your website as a means of raising environmental awareness. Perhaps UCG would be interested in getting involved or could a volunteer with the appropriate expertise be found for this? Your website is an excellent initiative as it not only raises environmental awareness of the rich biodiversity in Galway city, but it also allows for feedback on wildlife sightings. The 1 million trees project is a wonderful scheme and we would encourage you to consider providing interpretive signage in the locations where trees are provided. Well done also on organising biodiversity events such as nature walks, beach safaris, lectures and workshops as they are an excellent means of raising awareness of biodiversity.

Litter Control:

The committee is commended on the hard work undertaken in this category as it is a year-round effort that is undertaken on a regular basis. It is pleasing to read that the tidy towns volunteers and council staff work well together and that residents groups also get involved. Your performance on adjudication day was generally good and it appears to be an improvement on 2012 as the litter was not visible on many city centre streets, so your careful management of central areas appears to be working. However, litter was spotted in outlying areas and on some approach roads. Reasonable amounts of litter were observed in the road verges on the Headford Road and at the entrance to the Plots Road. Reasonable amounts of litter were also spotted outside the Courthouse, in the vicinity of the Crane Bar, in the car park beside the Garda Station at Nuns Island and in the Millennium Playground. Despite these incidences, the difficulties with litter control in a city centre are acknowledged and this was considered to be quite a good performance overall. Are the schools invited to participate in your litter picking events? Well done on your 'bin it your way', gum paper initiative and we would love to hear how it worked. As previously stated, the 'adopt a spot' project is highly commended and we are pleased to see that 12 groups have responded positively.

Sustainable Waste And Resource Management:

We are pleased to see that the committee is aware that this category changed in 2013 to move the focus to waste minimisation and elimination. Under this category tidy towns committees are encouraged to come up with innovative ways to reduce and eliminate waste generation, by raising awareness within their communities of the need to minimise and avoid waste production, and by devising actions that achieve this. Effective ways of raising awareness could include organising waste minimisation seminars and composting workshops with Galway City Council. Perhaps some waste minimisation and composting tips could be included on your website? The committee should also consider undertaking a community survey to ascertain what waste is being produced and by whom. The findings of the survey could then be used to devise actions to reduce and eliminate waste production. One possible way of undertaking a community survey is through the school, whereby the parents of the schoolchildren are encouraged to participate. We are pleased to hear that the Committee intend to promote the 'greener homes' initiative again this year, as this usually leads to a more efficient use of energy and that a big clear out event is being organized to benefit the Simon Community. We would also like to hear how the tidy towns committee achieve waste minimisation when carrying out its projects. For example, do you grow your own plants for your landscaping schemes? Is your communication strategy based entirely on phone, text, e-mail and website notices?

Tidiness:

We are disappointed to hear that graffiti is a problem in the city and we would urge you to work closely with community wardens and the community garda, if necessary, to resolve this problem. Has the possibility of a graffiti wall been considered, as this would allow graffiti artists to practice in a managed environment? You are commended on your work removing fly posting and unauthorised advertising and it is heartening to read that the traders are so supportive of the efforts of your volunteers when litter picking, painting, sweeping and weeding. We are pleased to read that you have undertaken a survey of poles and signs to identify which need replacing or cleaning and this has made a big difference to the appearance of the city. However, some untidy signage was spotted on the Headford Road (approaching the Bodkin roundabout), at the painted riverside railing close to the Bridge on Dominick Street and in the car park beside the Garda Station at Nuns Island. Other improvements are possible. Some untidy areas were spotted on the Headford Road, particularly at the substation adjoining the entrance to Sean Mulvey Park where overgrown grass as well as weed and litter were observed. Untidy parking areas were also noted and they include the parking area beside Abhainn na mBradan which had poor boundary treatment, litter and untidy signage. The small parking area in front of the wine shop in Claddagh was weedy and untidy and the entrance to the parking area to the rear of the Council Offices had weed at the base of its walls and what appears to be a rusty steel beam protruding from the pavement. The area between Abhainn na mBradan and the entrance to Bruach na Coiribe needed a sweep and the iron gate would benefit from paint. Finally, a survey should be undertaken of bins in the city as a number of untidy litter bins were seen on adjudication day.

Residential Areas:

We are delighted to read that the Tidy Towns and Galway City has many active and dedicated residents associations in the city and that the Galway City Garden competition is still going strong after 50 years! We are also pleased to read that you have entered the pride of place competition again this year, as many of the residential areas observed on adjudication day achieved a good standard of presentation. The attractive terraced housing on St Brendans Avenue, Courthouse Court Avenue, Walshes Terrace and St. Anthony's place all looked neat and tidy and individual. Houses and gardens are well maintained. The larger period buildings on Sea Road were admired, while a number of the established and mature residential areas in Claddagh such as Priory Road and Claddagh Place were most impressive.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approaches to Galway City were generally good with the Headford Road looking very well with its bright red planters with colourful landscaping on display – however, some verges and roadside areas here may need attention for 2014. The continuing (and necessary) road works at Bodkins Roundabout were observed and we look forward to seeing these completed in the years ahead. The approach road to the Cathedral was generally good. Your partnership approach to maintaining the central areas of Galway city is highly commended and we were delighted to read that the City Council, the tidytowns committee and the traders have worked closely together in providing extra bins, street cleaning and organising cleanup days, as this is considered to be the most effective way of achieving effective urban management. The businesses are also to be commended on their commitment to ensuring the front of the premises is kept clean. Well done also on providing new bike racks across the city and we would love to hear if any other improvements to the cycling infrastructure of Galway city (such as cycleways and greenways) are proposed.

General Impression:

The tidytowns committee is commended on a strong performance in the 2013 tidytowns competition. We note the intention to adopt a more community led approach and we would encourage you to begin this process with a new 3 to 5 year action plan, where tidytowns projects are selected by the communities that the committees represent. After all, a new start deserves a new Plan! Once projects are proposed, consider delegating responsibility for the project or maintenance and upkeep of parts of your area to other interested voluntary groups and individuals. Well done and keep up the good work for 2014!