

# Abbeyleix Tidy Towns: Work Plan 2017-2019

**SuperValu**   
**Tidy Towns**



Comhshaol, Pobal agus Rialtas Áitiúil  
Environment, Community and Local Government



## **Community Involvement & Planning**

We have good structures in place and score strongly in this category. However, there is plenty of scope to improve.

Formalise system of tracking planning applications. Chairperson (also local councillor) will be best placed to fulfill this role.

Benchmark achievement against proposed outputs of Sustainable Communities Plan

Move AGM to January to give greater lead in to national competition

Move forward on Community Energy Initiative

- Attend national briefing event

- Sing up to network and get mentor assigned

- Develop community energy charter

Update TT signs on entrance to towns

Continue to develop relationship with local schools

- Assist both schools to develop Outdoor classrooms

- Check if it is possible to keep Green Flags mounted over summer adjudication period

Set up section on website with archive of all relevant reports for Abbeyleix

- e.g. Sustainable Community Plan

- County Development Plan

- Architectural Conservation Area Report

- Bog Studies

- Brochures

- Other Relevant Reports

- Etc.

Communications

- Continue with award winning approach using Facebook

- Keep up notices on "Update" for no web users

- Maintain profile at public events e.g. Applefest, St Patricks Day Parade etc.

Develop Fundraising plan

## **Built Environment**

Wash and paint signage

Approach Laois County Council to pilot Walkability Audit

Sign Abbeyleix up to Wheelmap Project and recruit transition year students if possible

Set up dedicated area on website with reports such as ACA

Promote the Co Councils Shop Front Scheme to promote proper management of protected structures e.g. advertising of shop front scheme

Include information about the 'Area of Architectural Conservation'

Approach owners of derelict/ poorly maintained sites

Father Breen Park.

Complete painting of container

Paint door of public toilets

Approach Bonham's on the Carlow approach about painting premises

Approach Jade Palace about painting

Approach Breslin's Supervalu and St Vincents about spotlight

Advertising J. Bergin property about signage

Approach Fyffe/ butchers/ credit union about excessive signage (bearing in mind though that enterprise cannot be curbed as it is the life blood of our town)

Approach Clelands about removing clutter outside premises.

Inspect street signage, check directional is correct, clean or replace if required and paint all poles to agreed colour scheme,

Tackle motorists who park on paths wheelchair areas.

## **Landscaping and Open Spaces**

Maintain Northern Bookend 1916 garden

A directional sign above the Stradbally and Ballyroan directional signage here needs replacement or removal

Look at improving access from Manor Hotel Carpark to bog walks – consider less abled /wheelchair users if possible.

- Construct pergola(s) from car park to improve connectivity to bog

- Develop “easy access” walk along old railway down to the bog – placed seating at close intervals to facilitate/ provide rest stops for less able walkers.

Tree planting – continue with native tree planting programme and participate in tree week

- Replace failed trees on Southern Bookend –

- Maintain recently planted hedges through established phase – prune to encourage thick multi-stemmed growth

Continue with Incredible Edible Project

- Replace window boxes with new units with water reservoirs

## **Wildlife, Habitats and Natural Amenities**

Circulate information on closed hedge cutting season

Promote non- herbicide policy

- Make sure RSS, Tus and CE are fully signed up to no herbicide policy

- Encourage homeowners to avoid herbicide use

Management of new hedging - cut stems low to encourage tillering – e.g. Scoil Mhuire

Work with management of gold course to continue and enhance management of wildlife areas.

Retain ivy and wildflowers on walls

Continue to promote planting for pollination

- Support schools to develop pollinator friendly gardens and flower areas

- Arrange visits to schools by Dunamase beekeepers to educate on pollinator friendly practices

Continue to work with Bog project: work to objectives of Strategic Plan for the bog.

Continue guided tour programme to local areas of wildlife interest – e.g. graveyards, bog etc.

Work with Birdwatch Ireland to develop bird box programme

- Clean out old material each winter

- Participate in swift survey and work with Men's Shed to build new boxes

Review biodiversity action plan

- Maintain habitat for solitary bees and make sure local owners are aware of habitat

- Erect biodiversity signs on local habitat areas outside of bog where appropriate

Information

- Create publication section on website with copies relevant reports and brochures etc.

- Promote responsible habitat management on social media

Water Officer

Continue to work with water officer, Basil Mannion to develop initiatives on and around watercourses

## **Sustainable Waste and Resource Management**

Continue to develop continue Community Energy Project

- Formally sign up to SEC partnership with SEAI

- Develop and publish Energy Charter

- Develop tender for Energy Master Plan

- Publish and circulate survey to recruit home and businesses for energy audits

Green Home programme

Work with Environmental officer to roll out waste minimisation programmes

Consider food waste reduction programme

Schools

Support local schools to achieve additional green flags

Develop significant growing area in both schools

GIY

Work with GIY group to continue to develop community garden and allotments and also Dove House

- Pursue grant funding to redevelop and layout allotment garden on ground f St Michaels

Water Conservation

- Continue to promote innovative water ram project

- Consider innovative method of water transfer in Scoil Mhuire site –contact local engineer for ideas.

Bog Project

Support bog project to work with third level institution to continue climate research projects.

Promote Waste Reduction

Compostable cups programme

Look at introducing no posters large advertising boards of fly posting within the town. This has been in operation very successfully in Ballacolla, Clonaslee and Portarlinton.

Identify a designated area outside the town on the approach Rd

## **Tidiness and Litter Control**

Clean up bottle bank area and keep close eye on it

Focus on Father Breen Park which is prone to late night littering–

Remove NDP plan sign on ground of South School if regulations permit

Look to mobilise larger groups for weekly cleanup:

- Focus on specific areas using “blitz” approach rather than spreading out

- Place signage on area to be cleaned up to make local residents aware that their area is being targeted next

- Back up with social media campaign

Look into feasibility of buying a road sweeper

Work with Laois County Council to get greater access to their large sweeper.

Paint gates in consistent colour scheme

Paint street furniture on rotational programme

## **Residential Streets & Housing Areas**

The De Vesci Hill estate access way could be enhanced by painting of the high rear curtilage walls (of the houses facing the main road) which bound the access.

Continue to work with Fairways to keep up pollinator planting etc.

Work with Ashbrook to continue excellent work

Sli na Nóir and Gort na Nóir on the Mountrath approach were well presented. A long end wall on the right-hand side needs antifungal treatment.

Approach owner of broken wall opposite the exit to Balladine estate which would benefit from repair.

## **Approach Roads, Streets & Lanes**

Approach Laois Co Co additional traffic calming to discourage traffic diverting from motorway.

Replace failed tree on Southern Gateway

Get advice from Basil Mannion (Waterways officer) re: maintenance of watercourse under Millrace Bridge.

Put forward proposal to LCC to repaint bicycle lane markings by Manor Hotel and bog entrance.

Look at rerouting Killamuck Loop walk so that road crossing is via traffic island

Investigate the possibility of removing cluttered signage no need to repeated "welcome to" signs

Ensure that road signs and directional signage are correctly orientated.

Investigate opportunities for redevelopment of derelict Stone Arch industrial site - through development plan consultation process

Remove fly posting from utility poles



Approach Laois CO Co with details of poor road surface areas

Approach owners of commercial premises on Mountrath Rd to see if they would consider establishing hedging/ vegetation by perimeter fences

Approach LCC to repair damaged road signage, e.g. Mountrath Rd by Dunne's hardware

Approach LCC to repaint wheelchair parking spaces.

Erect pathways from Manor Hotel carpark to improve connectivity to Abbeyleix Bog

Promote responsible dog walking – look at launching formal dog walking code

## APPENDIX1

### Addressing Adjudicators comments in the National Tidy Towns report 2017

#### 1. Promote waste reduction

Think compostable while a lot of packaging is recyclable it is not biodegradable liaise with the 16 food outlets in the town and encourage them to embrace change. Delighted that one outlet has introduced biodegradable coffee cups. Keep cups should be encouraged. ATT are supporting the new Waste Management Bill

Consider introducing no posters large advertising boards of fly posting within the town. This has been in operation very successfully in Ballacolla, Clonaslee and Portarlinton.

Identify a designated area outside the town on the approach Rd

**Partners ;LCC ,ATT. and Abbeyleix C.E**

Make the community aware of the ACA status of the town. LCC need to be more proactive in ensuring that guidelines set out in the ACA are adhered to. A good example of following best practices in conservation and restoration is the work carried on the former AIB. ATT and individuals have contributed to the CDP.ACA Plan is available to view on **;[abbeyleixtidytowns.net](http://abbeyleixtidytowns.net) Partners ; ABC. ATT. and LCC**

2. **Sustainable Community Plan 2011** . Tidy Towns will put together a short concise review of our achievements **to date** . All actions in the plan are dependent on sourcing funding and cooperation with individuals and LCC

#### 3. **Provide additional information on Pembroke TCE on the TT website.**

Heritage sign with information on Pembroke Tce is on the railings in front on the former Hibernian Hotel additional information will be put on the TT website thanks to Brian Maher (Town Planner) who did the drawings and Lesley Kehoe Heritage researcher at Heritage House who provided the information

4. Tidy Towns brown signs on the Portlaoise and Durrow Rd need to be updated. LCC is responsible for replacing old signs. The delay was unavoidable because a

new sign had to be designed. A new logo to include Supervalu has now been designed. Partners LCC & AT

5. **Rationalise signage at Thornberry Junction. Heritage House, and the Approach Rd.**

Excessive signage has long been an issue with the TT adjudicators.

We can only address this issue with the support of **LCC** and the **TII**

6. **Review the accessibility of the town for people with disabilities.**

7. A Walkability Accessibility Age friendly audit was carried out on the town in November. As suggested by the 2017 adjudicator ATT could request information on accessibility internationally. ATT requested and receive the information from the National Tidy Towns Unit.

8. As part of the accessibility audit ATT has registered for a Wheel Map of the town. We were delighted that three students from St Fergal's College Rathdowney were part of the audit they will be mapping out the accessibility of three towns in Co Laois that were selected for the audit. Abbeyleix, Portarlinton, & Mountmellick . All disabled parking spaces need to be repainted .**Responsibility LCC** .Obstructions on the footpaths such as sandwiches board should be discontinued. This action will require full cooperation from the business people. ATT have made the observation in the past to adjudicators comments regarding billboards that ATT can advise but cannot put any obstacle in the way of trading in the town .**Partners ABC,LCC ATT L.P & St Fergal's College.**

9. **Delighted with the adjudicators regarding the colour and choice of street furniture.** Planting was described" as not fussy or overwhelming T T advised to keep planting to a minimum"

10. **Provide a Litter Bin in Fr Breen Park.** This is not an option because there was a lot of illegal dumping in the past. The park is much used by sporting clubs, a childcare facility and the general public it is not possible to patrol it 24/7. The park ranger employed under the RSS scheme and the Tus worker employed does an excellent job to maintain the 11 hectare site.

11. **Toilet door will be painted.** Extra murals will be added to the storage unit in the park. **Partners Park Development, ATT, and Dove House.**
12. **Judges suggestion to get roof of the COI washed .**ATT will bring it to the attention of the Rector. ATT work very closely with both the COI & RC churches in the town. Given the dwindling numbers attending services we are keenly aware that they struggle financially to do essential maintenance on their protected structures. They have drawn down grants in the past from the Heritage Council.
13. **Comments regarding the CU.** Allowances should be made for glazing on the windows. This is a new branding for the amalgamation of Portlaoise and the former Abbeyleix Credit Union. The reference to clutter on the footpath was hash. The adjudicator must take into account the tremendous effort business and individuals made in 2017. It was acknowledged in the second round adjudication that the central area of the town had seen an uplift
14. **Reference to the bottle banks.** We are not sure if this site was visited on the second round adjudication. The site was cleaned up, broken branches were removed, and large planters with pollinator friendly flowers were placed on the site when the clothes banks were removed. This action took place before the EFE judging on 7/7/2017. The site will need additional attention because there is a lot of dumping to the side of the bottle banks. We are exploring funding options for CCTV. **Partners LCC ,ATT C.E scheme and Re- Store**
15. **Replacing failed oak trees.** Replacement trees have been planted. The confusing sign at the bog entrance will be addressed. Partners **ATT& Abbeyleix Bog**
16. **Traffic congestion.** All day parking Market Square and the Main Street should be discouraged because it is bad for business. Explore the possibility of sourcing CCTV for church car park to reassure users it would be safe to park there. **Partners LCC,ABC,ATT**
17. **Ref to Hedge Cutting.** ATT always comply with the Wildlife Act 2006 no cutting of hedges from March 1<sup>st</sup> -31<sup>st</sup> August.
18. **No display of Green Flags.** Both schools were closed for summer holidays. **ATT will ensure flags will be displayed** in 2018. .Judge will be notified the South School can be accessed via the Main Avenue of the COI or via pathway at the Sextons House .**Partners; ATT ,South School, and Schoil Mhuire.**

19. **ATT to get stats from business regarding their waste policy.** We are aware that two business have Origin Green credentials others are signed up to REPAC. ATT could introduce the Green Home information plan through the environment Section of LCC. **Partners LCC, ABC, ATT.**
20. **Tidiness & Litter Control.** The loss of 6 marks was very harsh, and a bitter pill to swallow, because it did not reflect the very hard work of the committee and the CE scheme, who were very vigilant doing litter picks on the approach roads while having to contend with all the pollution and danger from the heavy duty trucks that travel through our town daily. The proposed new changes in the National Competition to celebrate 60 years is to be welcomed
21. **Reference to Vesci Hill.** Only 7 houses are occupied in the estate. The occupants have been in negative equity for the past 10 years and will be for the future. Great credit has to be given to the residents for trying to maintain the estate against all the odds.
22. **Reference to road Signs. Check out for accuracy ,cleanliness & visibility.** Signs were cleaned in May. H&S is a big issue on the approach rd when cleaning signs due the heavy traffic that passes through the town daily and the adverse and weather conditions were a factor in 2017.
23. **Clean out stream under the Millrace Bridge.** This will be addressed in 2018 ATT will seek advice from Basil Mannion Waterways and Communities Officer .  
**Partners ATT and C.E scheme. & Waterways & Community Officer**
24. **Approach Rd Streets & Lane .** Reference to having a Central Pedestrian Crossing. Having discussed this possibility with LCC we were advised this would not be an option. The priority of the TII & LCC is to keep the Northbound traffic moving. Abbeyleix is still a secondary route for traffic.
25. **Untidy site on the Ballymullen Rd .** Private property outside the remit of ATT
26. **Screening in fronts Pratts Machinery .** ATT have made several approach to the owners for the past no of years without success. Business owner objection to any type of screening because they need to display their machinery ATT respect the wishes of the owners.

27. **Concluding remarks of the Judge** .Concentrate on your approach roads and on tidiness and litter issues while still maintain our overall standard in the nine other categories
28. **Be encouraged by the judges comment that we are consistent, organised and, preserving.**