

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **238**
Category: **E** Date(s): **22/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	41
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	25
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	238

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you very much for the completed application form and the supplementary material, consisting of the very comprehensive photographic compilation, new 3 Year Plan and accompanying maps, which were an invaluable asset in ensuring that all relevant areas were identified and visited. Congratulations to you the Committee for the ongoing commitment to Tidy Towns and your endeavours to raise the standing of Monaghan Town in the competition year on year. Harnessing the efforts of all for the betterment of the town is a rather daunting task and the main committee has handled this task with consummate professionalism. Dealing with contentious issues in a tight knit community can be difficult, but you seem to be coping well. Ongoing interaction with other town organisations and the schools has resulted in targeted action items being completed within the given timeframe. Good also to report that you are engaging with the schools by way of presentations by Committee members and other relevant projects. The support of both, the Town and County Councils and other agencies has to be recognized, as these bodies are in a position to supply resources in terms of professional support and, there I say it, possible funding support to match your own inputs. Businesses in town have backed your efforts in various forms, this kind of practical support is invaluable and it's also a testament to the fact that they see what you are doing as beneficial to the well being of the town. Monaghan, as well as being a large town, is a very busy one and for the adjudicator it meant having to get out early on a couple of mornings to allow one a little more freedom to walk around. The town is impressive in terms of infrastructure and presentation; most of the commercial premises were in superb condition on adjudication day.

The Built Environment:

To give in depth comment on the recent built environment improvements alone would require a couple of pages in their own right, so one has to compromise and condense as best as possible. Monaghan's

streetscape has improved immeasurably over a number of years, helped in no small way by new tastefully designed footpaths, improved internal road surfaces and excellent street lighting. The standard of shop front presentation is at a level that one does not often encounter in most other towns and villages, and this, I suppose, is to be expected of a town that has made a great effort to reinvigorate itself since the troubles abated in the Northern part of the island. The following is a cross section of shop fronts that appealed to this particular adjudicator; the Magic Roundabout on Park Street with simple contrast of colours black, red and white, Tir Na Og Lounge also on Park Street and Wilson's Butcher Shop on the corner of Church Street. The Westerna Arms Hotel is very impressive building in the Diamond and it has been refurbished inside to a very high standard, The Shambles on Dawson Street and An Poc Fada on North Street also deserve mention. Ronaghan's Opticians is one of a number of fine premises viewed in and around the Market Street. The Main Shopping Centre in the town was also in good condition, tidy and compact. It is also nice to see that the traditional sweet shop has not lost its appeal with the Bon Bon still to the forefront, complete with canopy. These are just personal choices out of a wide selection of equally attractive options and it was also noted that on the day a number of premises were being refurbished. The standard of presentation of public buildings is exemplified by the excellent modern designed and well maintained County Buildings on the Glen Road. Monaghan Museum, which is 35 years in existence this year, also deserve to be mentioned for its orderly appearance. The Schools in both, the core area and the outskirts, were presented to a high standard, some like St MaCartans had very nice grounds. Positive comment too for the main Banks situated in the town centre, once again the stately Bank of Ireland took the plaudits. The town possesses a number of Churches of different denominations and one can encounter these when undertaking a historic town trail tour, all were well maintained with adjoining grounds tidy, particularly the imposing St McCartan's Cathedral. The improvements to the houses in Hill Street were noted and indeed make a significant positive difference to the area. Like any other town of similar size in the Country, dereliction can be problematic. I am aware that the committee is trying manfully to address a problem that can create sensitivities and indeed misunderstandings. The following are a few examples that are probably on the radar, but need to be mentioned at any rate: two derelict houses at the Old Cross and believe me they do take away from the fresh look of that part of town, a rather large run down warehouse on the Mall Road (maybe Canal Street) and finally the Oriel Service Station, and grounds on the Dublin Road exit. Even if the owners were identified and made aware of the condition of their properties, it would be seen as progress. You are wished well with your possible deliberations!

Landscaping:

There were many examples of both practical and colourful planting arrangements to be viewed in public places, roundabouts, green areas and at focal points such as the Dawson Street/Glen road junction. The use of trees as an urban necessity for both practical and aesthetic reasons is very important, it was good to see from your proposed plan that you intend to plant additional trees to complement the existing stock that can be viewed all around the town and its outskirts. The arrangement at the Park Street roundabout was particularly appealing, with its mix of shrubs and annuals such as cineraria and antirrhinums. This type of example was replicated in other parts of the town in different formats and again one was impressed with planter tubs in Market Street, although I am not sure if annuals should be planted at the base of a growing tree. The County Museum came in for favourable comment in last year's report and this year the arrangements were equally colourful. The new Town Council horticulturist will bring additional expertise to your committee and a separate landscaping plan should be put in place to ensure continuity of standard. Overall, the standard in this category was very good with the most of the arrangements maintained very well, one or two were a little overcrowded and just need to be thinned out.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Town and its surrounds have a a myriad of natural wildlife habitats, including the amazing town centre amenity Pater's Lake, with its novel viewing and feeding stand, as well as wonderful fountain. This is a great place for kids to become acquainted with the various species of wildlife. Another area is the Ulster Canal area and it was noted that there is ongoing maintenance taking place. One is aware of your ongoing efforts to help the conservation of nature in the town, but it might be worth considering consulting with the County Wildlife Ranger and other local wildlife enthusiasts to discuss the various options under this category. Continue to involve the school children of the town, as it will set the seeds of wildlife appreciation and good conservation practice for life. If it is part of your future work plan all the better.

Litter Control:

Despite the best efforts of media campaigns through the Dept of Environment, Local Authorities and individual organisations, such as Tidy Towns or Chambers Of Commerce, litter is still the main problem in most villages and towns around the country. Monaghan is a large and busy town, but one gets the impression that there has been a concerted effort to tackle the litter situation. It is not without its little black spots, one or two in the centre of town, but that is to be expected. The Armagh road again had some litter, as had an area near the

unoccupied warehouse on the Mall Road and a little on the outskirts of the Glen Road. The objective of this review is not to pinpoint every little area of indiscretion, but emphasise what is needed to contribute to a clean outdoor environment.

Your initiatives, particularly the School Litter Picking Squad sessions, contribute in a practical way. The IBAL report on Monaghan was quite good overall, unfortunately I seem to have temporarily mislaid the actual copy and cannot refer to actual detail. I am of the opinion that your encouragement to the businesses and the community as whole is paying off and a deserved increase in marks is the result. Keep putting the message of anti-litter to the forefront.

Waste Minimisation:

The Schools Educational Pack on waste and recycling is most innovative and credit must go to the four County Councils who, combined with the Race Against Waste campaign, put together this novel project. The above, in tandem with the Don't Let all go to Waste Award scheme indicates that you are committed to the concept of the 3 Rs; reduce, reuse, recycle. An increase in mark on last year is justified just for the above alone.

Tidiness:

As was the case last year, the streetscape of the core area of the town was quite tidy, helped in no small way by the efforts of business owners to keep the properties fresh and accompanying frontages, and side areas free from clutter. The comments in last year's report alluded to some untidy side alley ways and lanes, and there was a definite improvement this year. The areas of dereliction in the town have already been mentioned under a different category. In fact, dereliction is the main contributor to urban untidiness, as invariably side areas and frontages are litter traps, and also subject to uncontrolled weed growth. Not every one is enthused by the efforts of others to keep places in an acceptable condition, therefore you have the usual non-conformist in, an otherwise, pristine estate or street. Monaghan is no different and a number of examples of broken post and rail fencing, dirty walls, badly maintained railings and weed growth were observed. The committee can only spread the good gospel and hope that others react positively. The new street signs are excellent and when all are in place it will make a big difference to the town, especially if you forget your map!

Residential Areas:

The level of new housing development that has taken place in the town and suburbs over the last 5 years is quite staggering.

The sudden onset of the downturn has meant that most of this type of development has ceased, but fortunately it seems that Monaghan has avoided to a great extent the negative legacy of the abandoned half complete building site. For the most part, the new houses and apartments have blended in with what was already in place. One cannot be but impressed with presentation standards set by some of the more established housing areas, and there are many in the town and its surrounds. Having visited areas, old and new, from Corran on the Cootehill Road to Carannog, a nice tidy little estate, on the Glen Road, I can vouch for the fact that most are presented to a very good standard. There are a few areas that are punctuated with some untidy premises and, to be honest, not every one buys into Tidy Towns but the Committee, should if it has not done so already, try to get residents associations formed in areas that have high housing density. The Tidy Estates Competition also might be an ideal vehicle to tackle these problematic issues. The following were the personal choices of this adjudicator: Killygoan with its very attractive play area for kids, the aforementioned Crannog, Manorwood, although the landscaping arrangement at the entrance needs to be tidied up and Drombear, and Tully Estate on the Cootehill Road. Well done to all those residents that have made the effort to ensure that their respective estates are presented in accordance with best practice.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads were all of pretty good standard, with some small improvements needed in a few. The Coorlant and Annaghan roundabouts need have the landscaping arrangements revitalised, as they are slightly overgrown with some shrubs choked by grass and weed growth. It is important to have ongoing contact with the Roads section of Monaghan County Council to ensure that these areas do not become unsightly and create a bad first impression. The Castleblayney entrance has new extended footpaths and some very impressive private residences as a backdrop. Further out that road, the verges were a little overgrown. The Ballybay entrance is very impressive as it sweeps down into the town, road surface is excellent here and entrance signs clean and visible, and a lovely planting arrangement at the main junction present. Graham's Homebuild Centre on the Armagh road is a very well kept business and it enhances this entrance into the town. Overall, a good standard in this category.

General Impression:

An amount of excellent work has been undertaken by the Committee to help the betterment of the Town and raise its standing in the competition. It's good to see that there are so many workable projects in the offing and these will get the desired results over time. Monaghan is a very nice town to visit and the hospitality, and the service in businesses was top class. The Town has far more to offer in terms of potential in the Tidy Towns Competition and this year's marks will reflect the work and effort that has been undertaken since last year. In case, I may not have given it priority mention earlier, the transformation of the building in Hill Street is wonderful, so well done to all involved.