

Tidy Towns Competition 2010

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Monaghan** Ref: **611**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **239**
Category: **E** Date(s): **15/06/2010**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009	Mark Awarded 2010
Overall Development Approach	50	41	42
The Built Environment	50	35	35
Landscaping	50	28	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20	20
Litter Control	50	25	25
Waste Minimisation	20	11	10
Tidiness	30	14	15
Residential Areas	40	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30	30
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	400	238	239

Overall Development Approach:

Monaghan Town is very welcome to the 2010 National TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for the comprehensively completed entry form and supporting documents. Well done in the continued growth of your committee and the extent of interaction you have displayed with residents groups in the town. The expansion of the committee over the years has allowed you harness the specific skills of your members to great effect. With the new contacts you are making with residents groups would it be an opportune time to carry out a skills audit of the key members of their committees? You may find that some of their members have other skills that can be used to help both your committee and the wider town. You continue to use the local media to great effect and I enjoyed reading the articles included in the submission. Thank you for including these as it allows us see how you are getting your message across. Good luck with the redevelopment of your website. This is also an increasingly effective way of interacting and keeping the town informed of your work. It can also be a forum to publish your TidyTowns Plan and a message section should be provided for reviews and comments. This will be especially useful as you compile your new plan for 2013-13 as it can then be truly a democratic document with the comments of all considered. Please include the link to your web site in next year's submission.

The Built Environment:

Of course this years adjudication took place just as the works to your central area were commencing so we have held any increases in marks this year until the works are completed. We look forward to seeing how they turn out at next years visit so good luck with the pain that must be endured during works of this sort but the end result will be worth it. It is encouraging to see that you have the support of local businesses and the signs at the roundabouts show the interest they show in supporting the wider town environment. In addition many of their premises were neat and well maintained such as the modern Kingspan complex with its well mown verge frontages but perhaps more trees could be planted here to counterbalance in time the scale of the structure. In

addition the frontage of Standard Brands was very neat so well done to these major operators in the town. McArdles Office supplies occupies such a fine old building they may be persuaded to tidy up its frontage a little. Some attention to the shrub beds and a coat of paint on the railing at the entrance steps would make a big difference here. The restrained modern frontage of Blacks chemist was also admired. We look forward to seeing some progress at the old railway station site. Once again the municipal buildings in town held their own with the County Museum especially lovely.

Landscaping:

One of the highlights for this visit to your town was a quiet few minutes sitting by the shores of Peters Lake. A gem in such close proximity to the town centre and enjoyed by a local fisherman as well as numerous school children. The stainless steel furniture and entrance features here were really well designed and placed. However it is a pity that the tourist information sign is placed facing the access road to the car park where there was little room to stand and read its contents while avoiding passing traffic. Ensure any gaps in the beech hedge here are filled or if obvious desire lines are being created perhaps a slab should be placed at the opening to provide an informal access. The legacy of your tree planting over the last number of years is beginning to bear fruit with a fine landscape structure being created around the town. Perhaps an audit of street trees could be carried out to assess what you have and where you may need to focus efforts in the future. This could be tied in with your plans to engage a garden designer to plan the approach road spaces. We especially liked the idea of turning the old tree trunk into a gateway sculpture and look forward to seeing progress on a project such as this which will certainly grab the public's attention. Seasonal planting around the town was well presented with the beds at the traffic lights at Dunnes being prepared for planting on adjudication day.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Good luck with the progress on your biodiversity plan and we hope to see it completed and included with next years plan. The route to spread the information forthcoming from this study is appreciated as it will ensure all members of the community will be aware of the habitats their town contains. The study should be used as a baseline to create policies to either enhance or protect the areas identified. Use the knowledge within your group to further your progress and gain marks in this category.

Litter Control:

There was evidence of recent lunchtime debris at the benches at Peters Lake but this is testament of how popular this area is. Ensure this is included in regular litter patrols. Well done in harnessing the manpower of the community service scheme. We note your zero tolerance of fly posting however on adjudication day numerous locations around the town were being supplied with posters for a visiting circus. While there is a need to promote such attractions perhaps there should be agreed locations for posters to be put up rather than the blanket use of them as seen by the adjudicator. There was surprisingly little litter around the town core but perhaps some of the black bins here could be repainted. The bring centres visited were well presented and free of wind blown litter, sometimes a problem in these areas.

Waste Minimisation:

There was unfortunately very little included in your submission in this category, especially in the projects planned section. It is important not to confuse waste minimisation with biodiversity. While there was excellent works carried out in the preparation of the schools education pack you need to focus your attention on new initiatives here. We would encourage you to look to the excellent TidyTowns handbook for guidance on this issue.

Tidiness:

Well done in your novel initiative at dealing with some of the empty building around the town and the street by street approach used. The use of printed boards, especially with such cheerful images, really does fool the eye. In fact at first the adjudicator missed the house at the corner of Barrack Lane and it was only on closer inspection that I realised this was one of your installations. It is encouraging to see a new way to approach an issue that is becoming a concern in towns all over the county. We hope you will share your experiences with the other members of the Monaghan TidyTowns Network. The gates of the Monaghan County Council machinery yard could do with a coat of paints and should be addressed.

Residential Areas:

There are a range of residential types within your town and most were very well presented on adjudication day. We were especially impressed with the complex of old stone cottages at Belguim Square, this is a real hidden gem and gardens here were in the main kept very well. The works carried out to the estate at Mullaghmat is an obvious success, congratulations to all involved. However the issues facing residents of unfinished estates such as Latorcan is a real problem. While the grass verges were well kept here it seems as if a lot of the roadside planting within the housing areas has failed and some of the specimens were in

need of replacing. The general air of the estate was not helped by the fact that unoccupied or for sale units had in many cases let the front lawn area grow wild. This can really impact on the overall appearance of the estate. Owners should be encouraged to mow the grass at their properties even when they are unoccupied. Well done in the support that you continue to give residents and we look forward to seeing how these areas evolve and if innovative approaches can be taken to deal with the unfinished phases in the short to medium term.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Some of the roundabouts at the entrance to the town, while well planted, need some more regular maintenance during the height of the growing season. At the N2 roundabout near the Four Seasons Hotel there was weed growth in the planted areas and the grass margins could have been neater. As noted in last years report the Oriel Service station is still an issue for you and as it is so prominent on the approach to the town from the Dublin Road it is an area that we wish you luck with addressing. The town car parks were in general tidy and free of any litter blackspots. However we could not help feel that they would benefit from some more tree planting to break up the expanse of hard surfacing. Could perhaps a couple of the spaces in the car park opposite the shopping centre be sacrificed for tree planting bays? Three or four spaces here, converted to planters, would balance the trees planted to the margins of the shopping centre car park opposite, and really improve the appearance of the New Road.

General Impression:

Thank you for your excellent submission and the adjudicator enjoyed their visit to the town. However we look forward to judging the town next year when hopefully the works will be completed and residents will enjoy a rejuvenated town centre. This work will no doubt bring you additional marks and further improve you standing in the competition. We thank all involved with this year's submission for their hard work and congratulate all the volunteers who have come forward during the year to aid you. Best of luck for 2011.