

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **PORTLAOISE**
County : **LAOIS**
Category : **E**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 15-06-96

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded
Overall Developmental Approach	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	14
Landscaping	40	28
The Built Environment	40	30
Litter Control	40	18
Tidiness	20	11
Residential Areas	30	19
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	29
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	300	195

Adjudicator's Comments

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

The level of funding as described in the response to the questionnaire is unusually impressive and co-operation with local bodies is clearly a priority. It is to be hoped that the application to FAS has been successful - this kind of assistance has proved to be of immense help in several hundred other centres. Yours was the only committee from which we did not receive a map in time for adjudication, but the sites and projects listed in the Entry Form were discovered without much difficulty; the map proved invaluable as a reference after adjudication. Please ensure that your map is available at the proper time next year and please be sure that appropriate streets and estates are named on it and be sure to mark all the locations where projects have been completed over the previous twelve month period (rather than over two years, as is the case on the map provided this year). Your plan for the future is exciting, and the division of the town into zones seems highly practical; comments can only be made on results and the latter are eagerly looked forward to, over a period of 3-5 years.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

A nominal mark is being given to those committees which have not come forward with projects under this heading in its first year.

LANDSCAPING

Municipal landscaping, where it exists, is good but not exceptional. Some of the public utilities, such as the hospitals and health centre, have pleasing grounds. The cemetery is beautifully kept. The waterside amenity at Glen Downs is most attractive but the planting is not yet well enough established to be entered for a national award.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The chief public buildings were well presented, among them the County Hall, the Midland Health Board, the Psychiatric Hospital and the Department of Agriculture; the County Hospital needed freshening up with paint. Shopping centres and newer shops in the area abutting on the inner by-pass were also well presented. Many business premises in the older streets were spruce too. The Old Church conversion and the new Bank of Ireland were especially admired and will be entered in the competition for new shop-fronts; the more traditional shopfronts proposed by the committee were also photographed, though none seemed to possess the completely unique qualities expected; for example, Casey's corner premises is outstanding, but marred by plastic flowers.

LITTER CONTROL

Poor. While there was a scattering of litter in several of the residential areas mentioned below, the worst litter was seen in Main Street, Church Street, Coote Street and Market Square - often in proximity to litter bins. In fact it was the worst litter seen anywhere this year. Car parks and curtilages adjacent to the inner by-pass were remarkably litter-free.

TIDINESS

While excessive litter was a contributor to the untidy appearance of several areas, kerb-side weeds also seem to be endemic in Portlaoise. Projecting signs, poles and wirescapes are only partially problematic but the change envisaged in the Main Street plan should make a huge difference.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The numerous estates on either side of the Mountmellick road disclose a social imbalance more graphically than anywhere else seen in a comparatively confined area in a county town. Some estates,

such as Liocard and Beech Field are very smart and well maintained, others, such as Lake Glen, much less so; the litter and kerbside weed here and in an un-named adjoining estate was deplorable, but of the kind which individual householders ought to be able to clear from their frontages in ten minutes each. In one of these estates there was a splendid series of murals. The estates rising beyond the Swimming Pool were well kept in some places, poorly kept in others, with considerable litter and weed; there is an excellent opportunity to landscape the newest and furthest-out estate here, as site works and road building have not been completed. There is less of a bad contrast in housing and living standards in the west side of the town; Glen Downs has superb communal and private planting and this obviates the lack of individuality in the houses themselves - all of which are excellently cared for. The clearance of derelict sites adjoining Jessop, Church and Railway Streets has provided space for remarkable new housing developments; those which are finished are already well integrated with the townscape; this has been the most pleasing residential aspect viewed.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

Surfaces and paving are variable. The initial approaches coming from Mountrath and Mountmellick are very good indeed, as usual. Some lanes and entrys (such as Bull Lane) were neatly paved but many - including those in some housing estates - were not. There is a particularly scruffy area beside the Garda Barracks and the Department of Agriculture: the word which is in fact applicable to most of Portlaoise is 'inconsistency'. The Railway Station precinct was the best kept quarter of Portlaoise on adjudication day - good mature planting, pleasant old houses, new housing blending well, good street furniture.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

A once-dignified and enterprising town which is now starting to reassert itself in an imaginative way.