

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **ATHLONE**  
County : **WESTMEATH**  
Category : **F**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 10-07-96

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded
Overall Developmental Approach	50	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	16
Landscaping	40	24
The Built Environment	40	25
Litter Control	40	18
Tidiness	20	10
Residential Areas	30	20
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	18
General Impression	10	5
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>164</b>

## Adjudicator's Comments

### OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Athlone is an historic old town. Many of its buildings are of considerable age. The Shannon as well as being its most important feature has also been a barrier. The comments in last years report are still very relevant. While continuing progress is noted in many areas, increased effort with greater community participation, close co-operation with the Urban District Council and FAS etc. are essential if the many problem areas are to be successfully tackled. A development plan which would set out priority objectives and which could obtain widespread support would be a good means to chart the way forward. It is noted that you are working on such a plan and we look forward to receiving a copy in due course.

### WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

This is a new section in the competition. Athlone is very fortunate that it has a wide variety of very important habitats in its hinterland. These include the River Shannon. The water meadows below the town are one of the last bastions of the corncrake in Ireland and also an important wild fowl habitat. Mature trees, hedgerows, well planted gardens etc.. are also of significance. More can be made of these features especially the water meadows and river. You should invite local environmental experts to get involved and incorporate their proposals in your development plan.

### LANDSCAPING

Continuing improvements noted to river frontages. The landscaping work at the quay between town bridge and weir especially on the Connaught side is effective with attractive iron work and planting etc. The removal of the remains of the eel house makes a big improvement to the other quay. The river frontage between the town bridge and railway bridge is also maintained to a high standard; however the railway bridge is shabby and particularly needs painting. The extension of the riverside walk as indicated in your entry form is also noted. Landscaping has improved the appearance of the by-pass canal banks; however the filled-in stretch of canal at front of entrance to Shamrock Lodge Hotel is unsightly. There are several other attractive landscaping features throughout the town, e.g. roundabout at Regional College, at Beech Park West road junction etc. Colourful flower beds were noted in other areas, e.g. Arcadia Road and around the Castle. However more could be done at other roundabouts, e.g. Garden Vale. The large roundabout at the beginning of the by-pass road (Dublin side) is important. this is the main approach to the town; while there is a colourful flower bed on the Dublin side of the roundabout, much more of a feature could be made of this key location. Higher standards of maintenance are required at other flower beds, e.g. at the two railway stations.

### THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

While there have been improvements to several shop fronts throughout the town much more needs to be done. The overall appearance of Church Street is poor with many of the premises requiring painting. The Bank of Ireland building is ugly and out of character with the street scape and it also needs refurbishing. The Castle and its surrounds is now one of the most attractive parts of the town. The Chefs Hat visible from the town bridge adds interest and colour. Much of Pearse Street is derelict. Hopefully its redevelopment will commence at an early date. The refurbished Courthouse is now one of the most attractively presented buildings in the town. Repainting the disused cinema will be a big improvement. The display hoardings fronting onto the river should also be removed. The Sweeney is at an important junction and is now in need of considerable redecoration. Most of the public buildings, schools and churches etc. are well presented as are many of the industrial premises. The security fencing at McCarricks on the Dublin Road is a considerable eyesore. There are a number of derelict buildings which badly need attention, e.g. FTD Autos, Grace Park Industrial Carpets, etc. Kilmartins forecourt is attractively landscaped and sets the standard for garages and other business premises with extensive frontages.

## LITTER CONTROL

The comments in last years report still apply. Athlone has a serious litter problem and there has been no improvement since last year in spite of your on-going efforts. Considerable litter was present on stretches of all approach roads, side streets and in wider wind trap areas of main street. Litter was especially noticeable at virtually all the bridges throughout the town. A big effort is required to get litter under control - as well as the Local Authority you must involve the wider community and the schools, etc.

## TIDINESS

Athlone will have a much tidier appearance when litter is under better control and more of the business premises in the town centre have been freshened up. Improved maintenance of approach roads (excepting the by-pass) would also help.

## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The comments in last years report still apply. There are very many excellently presented private houses and gardens throughout the town. Here and there boundary walls/fences require attention as do gravelled margins between boundary wall and road. Most of the housing estates are acceptable. Beech Park West with its large well maintained grassed area and planting set the standard for the rest. Housing schemes at the Tuam road junction are also noteworthy. The standard of presentation of Ardbrae remains excellent. The new apartment at the lock gates when completed will considerably upgrade this area.

## ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The extensive tree planting carried out on the by-pass road is now coming into its own. The maturing trees give character to the by-pass as well as screening several unattractive views of the backs of houses. The other approaches all require considerable upgrading as there are large stretches of untended grass verges. There is scope for considerable additional tree planting especially on the wide grass verges, e.g. Ballinahown road, and at the new footpath in the vicinity of the Rugby Club. Breaches in stone walls need repair in several locations, e.g. Bonavalley Bridge.

## GENERAL IMPRESSION

Greater participation by the community and the business section is required so that the problem areas as mentioned in this report can be addressed. The approach roads are also not up to standard, however, your immediate priority must be better litter control.