

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **PORTUMNA**
County : **GALWAY**
Category : **C**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 20-06-98

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1998	Mark Awarded 1997
Overall Developmental Approach	50	35	33
The Built Environment	40	30	29
Landscaping	40	31	29
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	16
Litter Control	40	30	29
Tidiness	20	14	14
Residential Areas	30	23	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	30	29
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	217	208

Portumna, County Galway

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

The Working Group seems to have received even better co-operation this year, and the spirit of enterprise is burgeoning. The type of tourism which the locality attracts seems to be of the kind which is sympathetic to the built as well as the natural environment, and this is a blessing. The enclosures with the entry form are absorbing. Next year, on your map, please mark all sites where work has been completed (or is still ongoing) during the past twelve months - we are unlikely to miss anything, but one wants to be sure.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

This was this adjudicator's first visit to Portumna Castle since it opened to the public: it is a remarkable rehabilitation, typical of the care and sensitivity of the OPW. Other buildings tend to take second place in comparison! - but the Churches are well maintained as usual, the Shannon Oaks Hotel makes its mark with bravado, and St Mary's social centre and the several educational buildings on the right as you go towards Ballinasloe are well kept - those in the left less so. The fine Library and the Garda station still need painting. The splendid Workhouse is of considerable architectural interest - perhaps some time in the future a suitable purpose could be found for it. When nominating shopfronts for awards, please check that chimney stacks are well maintained, gables are painted to match frontages, weeds are not to be seen in roof gutters, roofs and upper stories are in as good a condition as the shopfront itself, and there are no plastic or mass-produced signs.

LANDSCAPING

The well-tended grassed spaces at the swimming area and also at the Marina are an impressive feature of Portumna: it is good to see that the breaking up of such spaces with flowerbeds and garden decorations has been resisted. The improved maintenance of the grounds from the town down to the Marina via the Priory was noted, but the real gem is the 17c formal garden at the Castle. Conventional landscaping at Woodpark and Clonfert Avenue is appropriate to those places, and incidental planting and floral decorations here and there add point. The disappointment was the old Church graveyard, where an imaginative project did not seem to have taken off by adjudication day - perhaps it will have come into its own by next year.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

The involvement of Irish Countryside Care is welcomed. It is wonderful to encounter so much bird life around the lake shore and in the woods. Have schoolgoers been asked to undertake

projects identifying fauna and flora?

LITTER CONTROL

There was appreciable kerbside litter in Brendan street. The rest of the town was comparatively litter-free - Portumna is in fact one of the better towns in this seemingly intractable matter. There was no litter at all in the area of the bottle-bank.

TIDINESS

Some forecourts of otherwise well maintained buildings as diverse as the Church of Ireland church and a factory in Clonfert Street were surprisingly weedy. Projecting signs and wirescapes are still in evidence, but decreasingly so.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Older street houses in the main thoroughfares and also in a quiet road behind St Brendan's Church are mostly well presented. Pleasant cottages were noted near the Workhouse, and the large estates such as Shannon Park and Marian Park have beautifully kept lawns and many pleasant private gardens.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The dignified new lamp standards in the Square are of a design which one would hope to see elsewhere in the course of time. Excellent new lighting was also seen on the road to the Marina. The public WC at the latter is one of the best kept in any town visited this year. Car parks are neatly laid out, especially the one in the Square - but the edge of the small car park at the Castle surprisingly lacks definition. Approach roads are about average, though the approach from Kilaloe gives a less impressive introduction to Portumna because of the variation between well and poorly kept boundaries.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Portumna at present makes its mark though its grand man-made and natural manifestations - the Shannon bridge, the Castle, the sweep of river and lake and the lakeside lawns and urban planted spaces. The details of townscape are what need to be improved, but there is every evidence these are receiving attention.

SECOND ADJUDICATION (10/08/98)

Portumna is an interesting and charming town with a unique heritage of fine features. The attractive limestone nameplate signs on the approach roads were admired. Do try to discourage advertising signs on these approaches as they are a visitor's first impression of the town and give a cluttered appearance. Plastic signs and curved canopies to shops should also be discouraged - the former replaced with more traditional timber signs and the

latter with more traditional fabric awnings. A stone wall was in progress on the Ballinasloe Road. Buildings in the town generally looked quite fresh, the Clonwyn Hotel being of particular note. The churches were both well presented, in particular the formerly placed Church of Ireland. The canopy feature to the Hayes & Sons Butchers and the gateway through to the old church are unique, unusual and charming features on Brendan Street. Litter control was a problem on the day, quite a lot was evident on the main streets in particular along Patrick Street, especially at the junction with Brendan Street. The old graveyard appeared to have been tidied up since first adjudication day, however, the entry area was quite weedy and littered as were the pathways. Do bear in mind that the rear of premises to Brendan Street are quite evident from here. The castle and grounds were quite magnificent and the attractive modern lamp standards were particularly admired. All in all a good effort.