

"Caring for our environment"

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

Results

Date of Adjudication : 05-06-98

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 1998	Mark Awarded 1997
Overall Developmental Approach	50	33	30
The Built Environment	40	27	26
Landscaping	40	26	25
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	17
Litter Control	40	18	18
Tidiness	20	11	10
Residential Areas	30	20	20
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	19	19
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	178	171

Athlone, Co. Westmeath

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Thank you for the excellent map and all the information. The ideas and the development programmes being undertaken with regards to litter and tidy areas is highly commendable and the plan is good and achievable. Perhaps a series of talks/ seminars on aspects of the competition such as the planting of window boxes, types, colour schemes, tree planting and maintenance, management of wildflower areas and exterior colour schemes and paintwork could be useful if run through the winter months and give people food for thought.

THE BUILD ENVIRONMENT

The town is divided in presentation. The ubiquitous 'Left Bank' of Athlone has some very well presented and pleasant shop fronts whereas the main street requires perhaps greater imagination. There are exceptions though in both cases. In 'Old Athlone' premises such as Athlone Antiques, Pavarottis Pizza, A Slice of Life, Garbz, Left Bank Bistro, the Bastion Gallery, and the row of shops including Na Linte and Shines Hairdressing were superb in their presentation. They have enhanced their own unique architecture through paint, lettering and general presentation. Further up in this area, Connaught Street, has a number of fine shops though unfortunately many were in disrepair. Traditional signage should be encouraged when shops are being refurbished. In the main street and further on out the Dublin road, Walshes, Conlons, Sophies Dream, Athlone Travel, Athlone Lighting and Body Options stood out in presentation. Behans also looked well though litter in the courtyard detracted from it and it would be preferable if notices were not done out on fluorescent cards as this was not in keeping with the stone work and ambience of the place. Byrnes Londis Food store exhibited superb hanging baskets. Athlone has a number of industrial parks and these are presented to a very high standard. Elan is magnificently landscaped - what an example for other industrial buildings and factories. In this estate also Oliver Carty and Irvine Welconstruct were noted for their excellent landscaping. The IDA Athlone Business and Technology Park has also a number of premises who must be proud of their presentation. - well done to all involved. The Dept. Of Education and Fas were also well presented. The Railway station is a fine building and was presented to a high standard. The interior was tidy, well painted and there was an abundance of tourist information - well done. The railway bridge across the River Shannon looked very fresh. Both secondary and primary schools were well presented. Schoolchildren are obviously very much involved with the competition and this develops an awareness for now and for the future of the competition and instils a sense of pride in their home town. The Athlone showground looked dilapidated and numerous seating within this area required repainting. The railings over the main bridge also need a coat of paint.

LANDSCAPING

The standard of landscaping varied around the town with some areas such as the entry points to the town from the by-pass and the by pass itself setting a very high standard. Golden Island Shopping Centre has nice pleasant new landscaping though it is important that trees are maintained regularly as there are several dead trees that should be removed. The area beside the town jetty is very nice and the promenade looked tidy though rose beds were empty. There is some excellent landscaping carried out by residents of the older estate opposite Orwell Grove. The estate opposite Shines was well presented though long grass and weeds needed to be removed from the base of trees. As mentioned before, many of the industrial premises and commercial premises set an example with their landscaping. Finally the Strand area was well presented with all seating well painted. Areas that require attention include the canal area opposite the Shamrock Lodge Hotel which is poorly maintained and a lot of litter was evident here too. An effort has been made near St. Mels Terrace, however, plants were required for the painted concrete containers.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

The situation of Athlone on the River Shannon should encourage it to make the most of the water wildlife habitat. Thank you for the information on the corncrake and well done to the Athlone Branch of Birdwatch Ireland in their involvement in the conservation project. Urban wildlife should also be considered - birdtables, bat boxes and the encouragement of the growth of wildflowers suitable to the river area should be encouraged. The adjudicators are sure that there are a huge number of ideas and projects that could be carried out with the local schools leading them to an increased awareness of the environment. More locally, the waterside feature at Talbot avenue was very good - the range of water flora was good.

LITTER CONTROL

Litter is a problem in Athlone. It is however, sporadic in its occurrence. Particularly bad was the area near St. Mels Terrace, Connaught Gardens, Magazine road, along the Lower road and out the Roscommon road. Full bins (at least they are being used) were outside the Prince of Wales hotel and the Castle. The main street was satisfactory as was the older part of the town. Congratulations must go to the Committee for the operation of 'Clean Sweep'. It is certainly the right approach and although litter was evident, progress is being made.

TIDINESS

Again this varied around the town and outskirts. The area around Deerpark road and Lyster street was untidy due to the lack of care on many fronts including poorly kept residences and weedy

areas. The area near the promenade and the Castle appeared tidy and was well kept as were the industrial estates and many of the residential areas. In places, though, grass has been cut and left to yellow which gives a very untidy appearance. The amenity area at the end of Ardbrae Park, although cut, had a scattering of litter and was quite untidy.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Athlone is ever increasing in size and new developments are always evident. Residential areas and estates were generally good. Battery Heights was satisfactory except for a small amount of litter. High praise must go to those who have made an effort with displays of roses and other plants. Westpark was nicely done and the older houses at Valley Court were well presented. Cypress Gardens was well landscaped and maintained though Auburn Heights was varied. Carton Drive was satisfactory. Meadowbrook and Willow Park were disappointing as there were weeds in flowerbeds, at the base of trees and very few hanging baskets. The tree planting in Crystal village is to be commended and will be nice when they mature in the future. Beechpark west was excellent though attention to detail such as regular tree maintenance and grass removal from the base of trees is required. Mayfield is also well presented with some fine treescapes. Well done to all involved.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The bypass of Athlone is well presented and landscaping is very pleasant. On the Dublin side the sculpture looked well and the welcome flowers announce Athlone as a town to passerbys and visitors. This type of landscaping is prevalent on the Continent. The adjudicators would suggest that if you wish to continue, that more permanent, shrubby planting is used so that the effect may be year round rather than summer. This also reduces the problems of poor flowering which can occur with poor weather conditions. Weeds did feature in gutters on the Monksland road and on the Galway road and the railway bridge junction at the end of the lower road requires attention - it is very weedy. There is a myriad of signs and broken barriers all which do not look well.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Athlone is a thriving and growing town. The Committee have made a concerted effort to improve the town and make it a pleasant place in which to live and visit. The River Shannon which dominates the town makes a great impact, contributing significantly to the attractiveness and resources of the town. The information sent to the adjudicators indicates that a serious and focused approach had been taken with regards to the future of the town. Perseverance and patience is required and progress will continue. Well done.