

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **BIRR**  
County : **OFFALY**  
Category : **D**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 11-07-2000

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2000	Mark Awarded 1999
Overall Developmental Approach	50	31	29
The Built Environment	40	34	34
Landscaping	40	33	32
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	19
Litter Control	40	28	28
Tidiness	20	15	15
Residential Areas	30	24	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	28	28
General Impression	10	8	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>216</b>

## **Birr, County Offaly**

### **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

Thank you for well completed entry form and good map which were helpful on the day of adjudication. The Heritage Town of Birr continues to improve and new developments within the town and at the Castle where a considerable amount of work was recently completed on the gardens are impressive.

### **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

To name but a few of the buildings/areas which were well presented:- the Birr Industrial Estate, Ko.Ro.Type Europe premises and Leoni premises opposite, County Arms Hotel, The Maltings area and Spinners Town House, the Cherry Tree and Sunrise Inn, the Texaco Station on the Athlone approach, the Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland Churches. Also most shops and business premises in the town which are in keeping with the character of Birr. It was noted that there was a high standard of window display at most premises, adding to the visitor experience. Other premises/areas noted were – The Midland Tribune Building (outer walls need attention here), the LONDIS shop which is too “busy” in its presentation with a plethora of signs etc., a blue and white phone box on a corner on the Banaher road which needs attention, Dooley’s Hotel which has brackets for hanging baskets but none were in place and the GAA grounds where an effort is needed. Good stone walls were noted throughout – a watch should be kept that ivy does not take these over. Lastly, in regard to the built environment, are there plans to fill the pedestal in the Square ? – this is a focal point of the town and it has a rather forlorn appearance. It is good to hear that you have won a Millennium Award from Shannon Development for the provision of new lights in Emmett Square – this total area deserves to be developed to the highest standard.

### **LANDSCAPING**

Good planting was noted on the approach roads and in the town – however, at some of these areas such as the planting near the river at the end of the loop road, the stone containers at the corner before St. Mary’s Hall and at the picnic area on the Banaher, the planting was rather sparse and grass had not been cut. However, to date the weather has not been kind to these endeavours this year. The rose planting at John’s Mall was admired and also the work undertaken at Camcor park, which is a fine facility for the town. It is good to note that you have planted 400 daffodil bulbs and these should be a delight next springtime.

## **WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES**

The planting and green areas throughout the town contribute in this category but there is scope for further development in this regard.

## **LITTER CONTROL.**

The provision of more litter bins by the Committee is to be welcomed. Mostly Birr was litter free with a few exceptions such as at the entrance to the Enterprise Centre on the Kinnitty approach where there were aeroboard fragments on the road outside and a large plastic cover on the ground inside the gateway. Quite an amount of litter was also to be seen on the pathway past the entrance to Birr Castle and a sprinkling on the Railway Rd/Seefin.

## **TIDINESS**

Though mostly neat and tidy some pockets needed attention such as at the two travellers encampments on the Athlone approach and on the loop road. At the Maltings courtyard there is an area where bins (4 large community type bins), crates, bottles, oil tank and gas cylinders are very visible. This area is adjacent to the Tourist Information Office and Pottery etc. It is near a lathed timber enclosure and we would suggest that the same treatment be given to the items mentioned above. Kerbsides in the town were mostly weed free but the path just past the Castle entrance was quite weedy. The Welcome to Lough Derg sign on the Athlone approach was overgrown and there were weeds on the monument in the centre of Emmett Square.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

Private houses on the approach roads and in the town are mostly contributing fully to the Tidy Towns efforts. At the terraced housing on the Nenagh/Borrisokane entrance an exceptional effort in colourful planting has taken place. Unfortunately, there are some boarded up houses on this street also. New housing estates are coming into being further out this road and no doubt these new residents will be encouraged to become involved in your endeavours.

## **ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS**

As there appears to have been perhaps pipe laying work carried out quite recently in Birr, quite a few road margins were left in a rough condition and need attention. On the Kinnitty approach the Heritage Town sign was overgrown and the Welcome to Birr signs on all roads except the Banagher approach needed to be cleaned.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSION.**

A town with great character which has the potential to do well in the competition in the years ahead.

## **SECOND ADJUDICATION (10/08/00)**

Perhaps one expects more of a designated Heritage Town – for example, the untidy poles and overhead wires should surely have been replaced in the handsome main streets and malls by more appropriate lamp standards, as has been done in several centres with less entitlement to this kind of attention. One would also like to see an absence of litter in a town which benefits so much from tourism; on second adjudication day, as on the first, there was conspicuous litter in many places, including in front of private houses where it would take no more than a few seconds for householders to remove it when necessary. The town is so attractive, and occupies such a picturesque setting, one would like to see it setting an example to all others. As it is, Birr is doing well in the Competition, thanks to the dedication of the Committee, but one would like to see it doing better.