

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **O'BRIENS BRIDGE**
County : **CLARE**
Category : **B**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 14-07-2001

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2001	Mark Awarded 2000
Overall Developmental Approach	50	40	38
The Built Environment	40	26	26
Landscaping	40	29	27
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	20	20
Litter Control	40	24	23
Tidiness	20	13	12
Residential Areas	30	19	19
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	23	23
General Impression	10	8	7
TOTAL MARK	300	202	195

O'Briens Bridge, Co. Clare

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

The three-year work plan is very simply presented and easily read and has helped in the adjudication for the town and shows how important such a document can be in directing the focus of works. It would seem that the plan is being followed and that the document represents an appropriate template for a town of this size. The presentation of the report, with a winter view of the town, is very helpful in seeing the image in a different season and illustrates the need that works must not only focus on an image that is created through summer time planting. The summary statement for each year was effective as a checklist.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

There is an immediate appeal for the presentation of the town for views seen from the bridge and the successful preservation of a village character must be a direct result of the Tidy Town's involvement. The presentation of the open space in front of the street, between the river and the buildings provides a very individual character that makes the town welcoming and easily interpreted for facilities that a visitor may desire to use. There is great variety in the presentation of the buildings and a lot of care has been dedicated to shop front design. The presentation of the butcher's shop, with the hanging signs, reinforces the village character, while the public houses on the opposite side are very charming spaces to sit out on a street. There is a pleasant balancing between the clutter that is important to a pedestrian space and the easy circulation of traffic through the town. It must be noted that the introduction of PVC window furniture is not an element that is encouraged within the Tidy Town assessment and that new works to buildings should focus on more traditional materials. The Committee should approach the E.S.B. to seek for the powerline to be reduced and removed from the bridge, as it imposes an unwarranted utility image to the bridge. It is noted that an objective in the next year's work is the significant amount of re-pointing that must be carried out to stone work. Advice must be sought on the appropriate traditional methods so that potential FAS workers will finish the stonework in a manner that is appropriate to historic structures. There is a proposal to provide under-lighting to the arches of the main bridge over the river and though this may improve night-time views from the village, Dúchas should be approached to ensure that such lighting is compatible with wildlife concerns.

LANDSCAPING

The open space is very effective in linking the residential areas and the river with the main street. There is perhaps a need to repair the goal posts and the netting, as they do look very worn. There is an effective amount of potted tubs and

flowering displays throughout the whole town which provides good colour. However, there is a need to seek for much more permanent planting. This will not only reduce maintenance, but also allow for better integration with the surrounding landscape. The use of bark mulch in the new car park area may be an effective maintenance approach, however there is the need to plant these areas with shrubs, so as to reduce the hard visual impression of a car park. The graveyard is very well maintained and it is noted that there is a proposed location for a plaque on the main street. In general the overall sympathy and extended connection of landscape features, both within the town and the surrounding environment, demonstrate a very successful approach by the Committee.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

The proposal to complete the six-mile loop walk near the river and canal will be a great improvement to the many amenities that are available to the town. The graveyard is an important area for wildlife and it is noted that the very clean crisp image removes the potential use of this space as a refuge for wildlife. There must be a greater emphasis in the use of native plants and plants that are local to the Shannon area, as there seems to be a preference for foreign plants and this may have to do with the summertime image, rather than wintertime supply of food for wildlife.

LITTER CONTROL

The introduction of new litter bins and their appropriate locations, particularly at the car park, is very effective in managing this aspect of an urban setting. Though some litter was noted, it is presumed that it would only have been there for a short time as an examination of all the spaces around the town clearly demonstrated that there is an effective policy in controlling litter.

TIDINESS

The whole town presents a very tidy image and it is very difficult to see where areas should be addressed as public spaces and buildings are all presented very well. Perhaps the presentation of bark mulch should be reconsidered, as it is not seen as a long term method for maintaining a tidy image. The E.S.B. pole on the main street should perhaps be under-grounded, as it does disrupt views up along the main street. This would seem to be a minor task if compared with many other towns in Clare and again the Committee should lobby the E.S.B. for this improvement.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

O'Brien's Bridge has very little residential development. However it is very well connected to the town and plays an important contribution in forming the compact character. The gardens are well maintained and the flower planting at the entrance to the housing estate is very well maintained. The strong shapes to the topiary evergreen plants on the road

leading to the E.S.B. Bridge must be complimented.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

Perhaps the greatest problem associated with O'Briens Bridge, for this category, is the control of car parking and how it must be controlled to ensure adequate traffic flow through the town. Car parking is well provided for. However there does seem to be a certain amount of uncontrolled parking, which interferes with traffic flow. Signage is well handled and all road surfaces are presented in a very tidy manner. The roads leading into the village are very well presented and boundary treatment with adjacent housing areas is very successful. Perhaps the junction at the road leading to the Doonass Falls should be re-examined for additional surfacing as the pot holes are quite severe and this is not a good introduction for potential visitors using this road as it can affect the safety for pedestrians.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

This town is very pleasant and makes tremendous use of the natural features that surround the town. The Tidy Towns Committee must be complimented for the provision of interesting visual features within the town, such as the new fountain and their consideration for installing further elements that will make any visit more personal and memorable.