

*"Caring for our environment"*

Centre : **O'CALLAGHANS MILLS**  
County : **CLARE**  
Category : **A**

**Results**

Date of Adjudication : 14-07-2001

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2001	Mark Awarded 2000
Overall Developmental Approach	50	31	31
The Built Environment	40	31	30
Landscaping	40	31	30
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	17	17
Litter Control	40	31	30
Tidiness	20	15	15
Residential Areas	30	23	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	29	29
General Impression	10	6	6
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>211</b>

## **O'Callaghans Mills, Co. Clare**

### **OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**

Thank you for the three to five-year plan for the village. The current set of tasks seem to be nearing completion and there is perhaps a need to update this document for the next three years. It was not possible to evaluate the restoration work to the mill wheel, even though it is a major feature in the works programme over the past three years. The need to maintain a level of cleanliness and tidiness would seem to be an expected element of this Competition and the updating of this document must clearly express other objectives that are necessary, thus an exploration into how wildlife categories or elements effecting the built environment must be addressed.

### **THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

The issue of dereliction must be addressed and outside advice, either from the County Council or other towns that have this problem must be sought. The preparation of a new Development Plan should present how this problem is addressed, as there are many old and attractive buildings associated with this village. Because of the extended nature of the village and important contribution that the landscape has in connecting the various parts, the new structures should seek to match with existing landscape boundary treatments, as their housing types are quite different from the older house types. Though the Post Office is well presented, the telephone kiosk is leaning over and there are broken windows, which require replacement, and the weeds along the kerbs need to be removed. However, it must be stated that the colour co-ordination of the pump and the telephone kiosk assist in a good presentation for this space.

### **LANDSCAPING**

The Tim Smythe Memorial Park at the entry to the village is very well maintained and is a significant contribution to the entry of this housing estate. However the broken wall, which is presumed to have happened by a car, must be repaired as it takes away from the landscape efforts. There is a significant number of tubs being used through the village, and though they provide an important theme element, they are not as necessary as the implementation of permanent planting. Permanent planting is required at strategic entry points to the town, particularly in the vicinity of the Church where the car parking area seems to have widened the road environment and requires better integration. It is recommended that a long-term plan be drawn up as to the strategic areas that require investment. This will alter the course of maintenance for the village and produce a much more sustainable environment in future years. The efforts at the Memorial Garden demonstrate that objectives are easily achieved by this Committee.

## **WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES**

This category was not addressed in the entry form and there is a need to integrate the demands of wildlife and natural amenities into proposed projects that would be carried out by the Committee or Local Authority. An effective example has been the planting of birch trees which are now quite mature and are seen as contributing to the natural and native plant selection associated with this region. This simple task of proper plant selection can be easily incorporated into this category and consideration must be given to both winter and summer environments. The river environment would seem to be a very good example of a sheltered water body and the Committee must be commended for retaining the extensive plantings near the bridge. Though beech trees are not native to Ireland, there is a mature stand along the road and some of these may require replacement plantings in future years.

## **LITTER CONTROL**

There does not seem to be a serious problem with litter in this village and no litter was noted on the day of adjudication.

## **TIDINESS**

Entry to the town at the Church and National School area would seem to need attention as there are a lot of overhead wires to the rear of the school and at the entrance. These are not visually appealing at an important public space. In general, tidiness is an element of the full presentation of the village and in this manner the village would seem to present various contrasting images which need better connection. In particular it would be the visual difference established between new housing and gardens and the older structures and their relationship to the road. This category does not rely solely on litter-free environments, but on how there is an overall philosophy on the presentation of the village. Consideration for this element must be presented in a future Development Plan.

## **RESIDENTIAL AREAS**

The Doonaille Estate is very well contained and integrated with hedges. The presentation of this estate along the main road has been very effective as it maintains the rural context of the village and does not introduce a suburban image against the main road. The new stone walls at the entry to the village are also to be commended.

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

There is a need for a connecting footway along the main road as there are some areas that are unsafe for pedestrians. The roads are quite varied in landscape treatment and the arching canopies over the road at various locations create a diverse and very rural character for the village. The provision of the East Clare Walk Map was very informative and easily read from a car. In general the roads are of good standards.

## **GENERAL IMPRESSION**

The village is quite enclosed and has a mixed range of elements. Overall the village is dominated by a landscape character and this needs to be enhanced and protected. The presentation of the bridge is perhaps somewhat understated, but must be complimented for retaining the natural setting.