

"Caring for our environment"

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

Results

Date of Adjudication : 27-06-2001

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2001	Mark Awarded 2000
Overall Developmental Approach	50	32	34
The Built Environment	40	30	29
Landscaping	40	28	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	18
Litter Control	40	20	20
Tidiness	20	11	12
Residential Areas	30	21	21
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	22	22
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	188	190

Athlone, Co. Westmeath

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Due to the size of Athlone it is suggested that the committee identify specific geographical objectives and motivate tidy town activity in selected parts of the town. Athlone is going through a time of considerable commercial, industrial and residential development and most of the Tidy Town presentation difficulties being experienced, have their source in this reconstruction stage. There is opportunity however to influence construction style and quality to ensure a place for Athlone in the top section of the country's most attractive towns. There is no Tidy Towns plan on file and in its absence it is difficult to get a perspective on the immediate or longer term ambitions.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The built environment is very much a mixture of the old and new replacement structures. Major redevelopment works are underway at the site of the cinema beside the bridge over the Shannon. On the north eastern bank of the river above the bridge the new Silver Quay apartment block is almost complete but still has a lot of building materials and debris on view. The bridge is well presented with no litter and features period lamp standards. Centerpiece is Athlone Castle. Its riverside frontage is dressed with small lawns (which could be trimmed), and the ramp up to the castle gate is litter free. Within this area, Market Place, Castle Street, Fry Street, High Street and the Quay display a colorful selection of business houses, interesting pubs, restaurants and antique shops. The stretch along the riverside quay between the lock and bridge looks very attractive but somewhat marred by the old storage sheds which should either be removed or made into a positive feature. The new commercial buildings along Pearse Street look very bright and inviting and will bring considerable economic and social activity to what had become a dull and uninteresting part of town. St. Peters Church the dominant building on the Galway junction is well presented with clean frontage and two pots of shrubs at its entrance. In the Church Street area, the Franciscan Friary is beautifully presented with an excellent display of flower boxes along the top of its railing frontage. The Friary grounds display a grotto with shrubs and garden and floral tubs at church door entrance. The Church of Ireland is the main building interest in Church Street and is a delightful old structure. St. Marys Church is well presented with trimmed lawns and flowers growing in planters at the entrance. Commercial premise facades throughout Athlone have a good variety of colours. The Sweeney premises in which Ladbrooks have their office is in a very poor state of presentation.

LANDSCAPING

The water pump feature set in front of the castle wall is beautifully presented with seating, and shrubs against a background of maturing plants. There are period style lamp standards with hanging baskets of colorful flowers. Market Square, Castle Street and its adjoining Shop Street and Bastion Street continue the old world style of colorful but narrow streets. Footpaths are generally quite good with kerbs dished for invalid use. Good to see Ganleys supporting

the litter free zone in Church Street. The only display of trees and shrubs in Church Street is in the well-maintained gardens surrounding the Church of Ireland. The area in front of the Church of Ireland has period lamp standards and hanging baskets. Some consideration might be given to placing trees along the length of the street to give a 'softer' presentation of its buildings

At the RTC there is a well displayed roundabout with colorful flowers and shrubs. There is a new building site on the left with attendant broken boundary wall and debris.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

There is attractive amenity signposting at a number of points around the town. At the rear of the Friary property there is an attractive riverside amenity park which runs south of the town with fine trees and seating. There was no wildlife interpretation. Some tree screening of the views of rear side of premises backing onto the riverside should be considered. The park which fronts the army barracks and the river looks quite well. The line of chained bollards looks well but the bollard closest to the library is broken and lying on its side. The planters and potted shrubs appear to have been vandalized.

LITTER CONTROL

Athlone was fairly litter free although there was some litter at the 'old brigadier' memorial in Church St., and in the amenity park in front of the army barracks, and in St. Marys Square.

TIDINESS

The sign mounted on the grass area close to the ramp entrance is showing deterioration and really needs to be cleaned or replaced. Some weed in kerbstones in St. Mary's Square but it has good car park definition with white painted bollard frontage. The weed growing from the battlements of Athlone Castle should be removed.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Overall the mature Athlone residential areas are well presented with nicely presented gardens. Around Beech Park there is a fine open grass area which could be trimmed but path cleaning work etc. was ongoing at time of visit.

From the Paddock Hotel the presentation is maturer with trees and well-maintained residential gardens. There is a fine floral display at the Golden Island shopping center entrance.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

Approaches to the town are varied but sometimes untidy. The Dublin entrance showed considerable weed and the roundabout just short of the RTC has graffiti as has the brown Athlone town sign. The entrance to Athlone from the Galway side is quite attractive. The cut stone walls are well presented. The entrance from the Roscommon Road is fine with nicely presented housing and gardens on the left-hand side. On the approach from the Coosan side, the verge on one side has been cut but clippings not removed. The Cavan entrance is fine with a number of mature houses and gardens.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Athlone is a most interesting old historic town. It is going through a phase of major physical change and great care has to be taken to preserve its narrow streetscapes and old buildings. The push and pull of sub urban shopping center developments has resulted in a number of hopefully, temporary town center premise closures which is somewhat damaging to street presentation. Greater cooperation by all interested parties would do a lot to generate higher levels of community spirit.