

"Caring for our environment"

Centre : **PORTLAOISE**
County : **LAOIS**
Category : **E**

Results

Date of Adjudication : 10-07-2002

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2002	Mark Awarded 2001
Overall Developmental Approach	50	45	45
The Built Environment	40	35	34
Landscaping	40	34	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	18
Litter Control	40	14	14
Tidiness	20	12	12
Residential Areas	30	24	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	31	31
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	220	218

Portlaoise, County Laois

OVERALL DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

Welcome to Tidy Towns Competition 2002. Portlaoise is going through an interesting period of redevelopment. The community is to be commended for retaining much of the old town while accommodating population expansion and renewal.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Garda Station has an exceptional presentation with a large display of shrub gardens. Laois County Council's Offices are presented well. The Dunamaisy Theatre on Church St. so easily accessible from the main street is a building of fine quality. The housing and Heritage Hotel development in the Jessop Street area represents a confident statement about the future of Portlaoise. It has been well set into the 'old' town environs with easy pedestrian access, resident car parking, and use of trees to soften walls. The old national bank building has fine architectural lines and should be preserved. The red bricked RC Church at the Stradbally Corner is an imposing structure nicely presented with mature plant and flower beds set to front and in car parks. The ESB Training Centre walls require repainting but the Office closer to town looks very well with planters of flowers and shrubs. St. Francis School and its planted front gardens looks fine. The Railway Station and nearby Methodist Church are well presented and are excellent examples of 19th. century architectural style.

LANDSCAPING

Portlaoise has benefited quite considerably from its urban renewal scheme. The main street is introduced at the Limerick end through a round about well displayed with flower boxes on its islands and a circular planter of shrubs in its centre. The semi pedestrianised main street is most attractively presented with its wide variety of small and colourful shop fronts. The 'cobbled' paths and narrow street link the various elements into a colourful and entertaining thoroughfare dressed with trees, decorative lamp standards and hanging baskets. The access lane from Lyster Square, Bull Lane, Church St., Railway St., and Church Avenue extend main street influence to other important parts of the town. Where the Main Street widens at Lower Square there is a planter and some seating. Consideration should be given to placing a sculpture piece in the square. The green area along Fintan Lalor Avenue is attractive with some sculpture on display. The Pedestrian bridge is unfortunate. It dominates the skyline and as there is a road level pedestrian crossing at this point it does not appear to any longer have a purpose.

WILDLIFE AND NATURAL AMENITIES

The Tidy Towns Committee is commended for its designation of various points around town as wildlife habitats and sanctuaries. In Railway Street is an old graveyard and

tower which is not maintained. It appears to offer a wildlife development opportunity. It has a beautiful old wall and fine mature tree. Railings to front of Ridge Burial Ground had been painted and looked fine. The War Memorial was clean and tidy. The new park at Green Mill Lane looks set to become a popular venue.

LITTER CONTROL

While obviously a difficulty for larger towns - a challenge recognised by the committee, litter is hard to control. Litter bins were well distributed throughout the town. Unfortunately, the river contained a dumped shopping trolley and some litter. There was a fair amount of litter on the Ridge Road and at the entrance to the Burial ground.

TIDINESS

The small open area behind Sambodinos is untidy. Condells Garage and its machinery yard should be screened. There is a problem with Rices Corner at the Limerick Road round about. The round about at the bottom of Church Street is damaged and nearby wall broken on fenced site. Bill poster at entrance to Railway Street should be removed as should untidy pieces of street furniture at the corner below. Surprisingly, Bridge Street, a continuation of Main Street, has a number of dilapidated frontages. Grass on Ridge Burial Ground had been cut but not removed.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

On the motorway access road there are a number of private houses most well presented including the row of new houses opposite the Garda Station. Beechfield Estate looked excellent with well kept bungalows, trimmed open lawns, and where appropriate, wall screening. The Georgian houses along Railway Street are very attractive.

ROADS, STREETS AND BACK AREAS

The approach from the Motorway intersection is dressed with semi mature trees. At the 30mph speed limit there is an attractive row of trees, backed by wire fence, this requires better screening. The right hand side is good, mature hedge and to the left a verge in front of new houses. It is quite a nice approach into the town. The path close to tourist office sign is damaged. The back of the GAA park is not an attractive façade, but the developing screening along the fence frontage is beginning to improve this aspect. The wall between GAA grounds and the new garage construction building to the left requires screening. The approach from Timahoe Road is dominated by industrial and commercial buildings.

GENERAL IMPRESSION

Portlaoise was a very pleasant surprise. The town and its surrounds are growing, but the influence of the Tidy Towns Committee and its associated local authority and town

associations is ensuring a much improved experience for residents and visitors alike.