

Tidy Towns Competition 2003

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portlaoise**

Ref: **66**

County: **Laois**

Mark: **218**

Category: **F**

Date: **09/07/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	45	45
The Built Environment	40	35	35
Landscaping	40	34	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	18
Litter Control	40	13	14
Tidiness	20	12	12
Residential Areas	30	24	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	30	31
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	218	220

Overall Developmental Approach:

Portlaoise is enjoying an extra-ordinary time of redevelopment. The centre of the town has virtually been rebuilt, while its surrounding suburbs continue to see a large number of residential developments take place. In this context the Tidy Town's Committee is playing an important role in encouraging support and protection of the town's cultural heritage as very well expressed in your Tidy Town's Plan 2003.

The Built Environment:

Dunamaise Art and Theatre Centre is really well presented and is a highlight in the architectural quality of Portlaoise buildings. Along the main street the old Munster and Leinster Bank, now a restaurant, is a fine red brick structure which should be preserved. In general the street's buildings are attractively presented with perhaps the unfortunate selection of plastic facades in a number of cases. Occasions flower shop caught the eye. The Heritage Hotel and Conference Centre is a most imposing building and along with the centre town redevelopments makes a clear and confident statement about Portlaoise's future. The trees and other shrubberies are maturing but it will be some time before they provide relief from the modern architectural lines of the new structures. In the Church street area there are a number of very attractive houses and offices. Wesley Hall Methodist Church is delightful. The Railway Station House is a showpiece. On inspection day roof restoration work was ongoing. Smaointe is an attractive shop front with its unusual half doors. Some damage to the paintwork was noted at the bottom right hand corner. St. Peter and Pauls church

looks very well. Its car park has a series of beds planted with shrubs and colourful flowers. The car park itself is clean and tidy. The Church of Ireland property is a delightful retreat from the town's commercially active main street. Its grounds are well maintained with trimmed grasses in its grave yard.

The GAA Park badly needs landscaping or screening. The County Buildings, Garda Station, and Government offices look fine with frontages of shrubs. The Laois Livestock Mart with its wire fencing should be better presented. St. Francis School and its planted front gardens looks fine.

Landscaping:

Tubs of flowers have been placed on the islands which form part of the traffic roundabouts. The 'square' in the pedestrianised main street is very successful with full use made of seating set amongst colourful planters of flowers. The old style decorative lamps are in sympathy with the narrow street and its small retail outlets.

Access to the main street from the Dublin road side has a corner of trees and shrubs but it requires maintenance and also has a lot of litter. In addition, an open area to the right, a back entrance to Main Street buildings requires maintenance

The riverside railings along the Fintan Lalor Avenue with their flower boxes are a very attractive feature. The linear park which runs up along the Fintan Lalor Avenue is interesting and attractive in its own right with maturing trees, colourful flower beds and sculptures. In addition, its role in screening the back of Main Street premises is very well effected. Buildings at Lismard Court have also benefited from the island of trees at its frontage.

The shopping centre has little to recommend in landscaping terms, and the pedestrian bridge is as unsightly as it is irrelevant.

A lot of development work was ongoing along Green Mill Lane.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The War Memorial is cleanly maintained with cut lawns and seats in the surrounding small park. The young trees are maturing nicely.

The Ridge burial ground is interesting on two levels. The ancient headstones and its unusual elevation offer views over the town and surroundings. Unfortunately, the views are marred by the unsightly aspect to backs of houses and commercial buildings which tends to underwrite a missed opportunity. A row of fast growing trees will help at one point near the entrance gate. The grass on the ridge has been trimmed and this helps pronounce its interesting shape. In addition some colour has been added through the introduction of flower beds. Some interpretation would be useful to explain its part in the Portlaoise past. There is some litter in evidence.

The Peoples Park is an attractive development. It is quite close to the town centre. It features a large grassed area in which there are a number of young trees. The adjacent Glendowns Wildlife Park has an abundance of duck etc., and also a children's play area which was being well used on inspection day. Some of the park's pathways are becoming overgrown with weed. There is a wide range of wildlife and wildflower in evidence particularly near the water areas. The visit experience will improve when the trees around the periphery grow and mature to screen out industrial and other buildings nearby. Better signposting is recommended as is the ducting of telegraph cables. The park was opened in June 2000. In general, maintenance could be improved.

Litter Control:

The removal of plastic bags has had an extraordinary beneficial effect on the problem of street litter. There was some litter, mainly cigarette ends and small paper items. Litter was also an issue on one of the estates on the Tullamore Road.

Tidiness:

Some roadside verges require more attention, particularly in the area close to the motorway bypass

roundabout. The GAA Park requires landscaping. it was somewhat disappointing to see the large advertising hoarding on the gable end of Nationwide Cellular shop along the Main Street. This is totally out of proportion to the narrow street. Dunnes Store shopping centre is somewhat untidily presented. Kerb weed and generally untidy entrance to the back of the shopping centre on the Timahoe Road as well as in front of Supermacs on Fintan Lalor Avenue was evident.

Residential Areas:

Beechlawn has a very attractive tree and green area fronting onto the main Tullamore road, and the whole estate looks well. There is a nice line of mature trees at Liocard which again is a well presented estate. 'The Village' open plan residential development is clean and tidy. Beechfield is very attractively landscaped. The estate has two portals at its entrance and the estate itself is maintained to a very high level. The entrance to Cherrygarth Estate is very well presented as are its green area and trees around its periphery. Houses are well maintained. Kylebrook is also superb. There are grass verges and small cypress type trees at each house with central open green area. Housing here is quite new and all very well maintained. Very well done. On the motorway access road there are a number of private houses. Most are 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 style houses along Railway Street are very attractive.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from the Dublin Road side looks well with locations like Laurel Court highlighting well presented open areas. The roadside verges in general are good but some site development needs to be completed before this part of Portlaoise settles down.

A fair amount of kerb side weed was noted along the wall below railings which could be painted. The road surface is good and there is no wirescape.

There is so much construction work ongoing. To the right at the town entrance is an impressive hedge somewhat marred by a poster site behind.

On the Timahoe Road the Portlaoise Day Centre looks fine with its lawn frontage, as does St. Francis School. An attractive green area is somewhat hindered by the Dysart Motors sign. Before the 30mph sign are a number of mature and well presented gardens and houses. The approach to Portlaoise from the Tullamore Road has a pleasantly landscaped area adjacent to the 30mph sign. This is followed by an open area, one of a number which are undergoing development.

General Impression:

Portlaoise is experiencing a time of considerable development change. In particular the levels of participation by a large number of its housing estates is very high indeed and the Tidy Towns committee is to be congratulated in this regard. The committee is also commended for its work with Laois County Council.