

# Tidy Towns Competition 2003

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dundalk**

Ref: **485**

County: **Louth**

Mark: **235**

Category: **F**

Date: **05/08/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	42	41
The Built Environment	40	32	29
Landscaping	40	35	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	21
Litter Control	40	28	27
Tidiness	20	16	15
Residential Areas	30	23	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	32	32
General Impression	10	8	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>228</b>

### Overall Developmental Approach:

Drogheda Town Council is thanked for their entry into this year's Tidy Towns Competition. This submission included a completed Entry Form and an excellent series of back-up information, a booklet of "Improve our Town Competition 2002" and various maps of the town, together with a three-year Development Programme. The population is approximately 28,000 people and makes it one of the larger towns in the Competition. There is no separate Tidy Towns Committee for Dundalk, but the Town Council works in association with many local associations. Their "Improve our Town Competition 2002" is somewhat like the present Tidy Towns Competition and the many elements that make up the complete fabric of Dundalk are sub-divided into the following sub-headings of their excellent Competition:

Housing estates with less than fifty houses.  
Estates with 51-125 houses.  
Best overall garden.  
Best Residential Floral Display.  
Best Garden Local Authority.  
Best Town House.  
Best Public House.  
Best Retail Premises.  
Best Restaurant.  
Best Tourist Premises.  
Best Financial Premises.

## **The Built Environment:**

Dundalk is an old town with a long history stretching back to 1186. It is now the administrative town of the county. The fabric and general appearance of the town has improved immeasurably over the last twenty five years. In place now is the Inner Relief Road, the Tain Bridge and, very recently, the M1 motorway which comes as far as Dundalk. Heavy through traffic is by-passing its administrative core. No longer is the core area choked with traffic seeking car parking, it is now there. There is now time to develop the town into a most pleasant place to live and work in. St. Patrick's Cathedral, 1835, is a very fine building in a very fine setting. What a pity that the space between Roden Place and the facade of the building is used as a car park and demeans the space. The few cars should be removed and the space either developed as a well designed hard surface or a beautiful lawn. The new library, a most interesting building in a well designed setting, the nearby County Museum and Kelly's Monument, add greatly to the fabric of the town. Indeed, the core between the Long Walk and Chapel Street is now vibrant and most interesting. The courthouse, now recently completely renovated looks wonderful. Unfortunately the same cannot be said for Market Square which is now very grubby, with a very fine water feature completely neglected and the art centre enclosed in a wire cage. Hopefully, in time, all these elements will be renovated and allow them to be part of this renaissant core of the town.

## **Landscaping:**

The Inner Relief Road, with its large industrial buildings and excellently maintained grounds, is a very fine road and defines the eastern boundary of the town. The whole area between the Tain bridge westwards to St. Mary's Schools is a very fine urban green space, as is the area including the G.A.A. grounds, New Forest Park and the Rampards area. These very fine urban green spaces will undoubtedly develop in time as a series of mature parks enclosing these sections of the town. On a smaller scale there are excellent housing areas with very well maintained local parks and play areas. The gardens of many of the houses here are a job to see and give the areas a feeling of welcome. The "Improve Our Town Competition", run by the Town Council, is doing wonderful work and improving the entire town, especially the housing areas. What is needed now is a new tree planting programme conceived as an overall plan, but then to involve these very good residential associations in the final siting or planting of these trees, and above all, involving the local school children in the planting in order to develop both a sense of pride in their location and by their action to cut down on vandalism. Trees must be berried or with other forms of fruit bearing trees. Tree species to use could be oak, ash, rowan, beech, chestnut or thorn. The aim is to encourage bird life within the town.

## **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Dundalk is blessed with having Dundalk Bay and so many habitats for fauna along this coastline beside the town. The aim is more to encourage and protect certain habitats rather than create new ones. Possibly the council should contact ENFO to obtain some of the very fine publications on wildlife conservation they produce as well as Birdwatch Ireland.

## **Litter Control:**

Most of the areas in the town core were free of litter on the day of adjudication and the council are to be congratulated on this fine achievement. There was some litter in Market Square and hopefully this will go. It is very pleasing to see the appointment of two litter wardens. These people, backed up with prominent display boards in various parts of the town showing the statutory laws relating to packaging material from shops, general litter and dog pollution and fines applicable to these, should further diminish this ever-present social problem. The presence of these signs in other languages is a sign of the times.

## **Tidiness:**

Dundalk was a very tidy town in most areas and again the council is to be congratulated on this fine achievement. The new signage was noted. A comment by the adjudicator is offered in relation to timber seats; their constant repair and painting. The council should consider the use of recycled plastic which is black and very tough. An item that may not occur in Dundalk, but is worth mentioning is that there is a tendency, during the school holiday period, to neglect the school grounds. It is important that pupils should be organised to keep the grass cut and to pick up windblown litter and also keep adjoining verges, kerbing and bases of walls free of weeds.

## **Residential Areas:**

As stated under landscaping, there are some very fine residential areas, ranging from the terraces of red brick in the centre of town, to the detached or semi-detached houses in the suburban areas. The various competitions organised by the council shows in the quality of front gardens. Another approach is possibly needed in the red brick terraces that are without front areas. Possibly a competition on hanging baskets and/or window boxes could be considered.

## **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

New street signage was noted and was considered excellent, though more is still needed, especially in the middle sections of streets. Many footpaths had disabled access facilities, both ramps and raised studs and more are to be completed. The council is to be commended on this. Most parking areas are very well presented and maintained.

## **General Impression:**

Dundalk is now a most pleasant town and there is a pride that shows, both in the quality of new public buildings and the rehabilitation of older buildings and the council are to be praised on this. The new major road schemes, by taking through traffic out of the central area, has added greatly to the pleasant ambience in the central area.

## **Second Round Adjudication:**

It is truly encouraging to find a large town - with all a large town's attendant problems - coming on so well in this competition. The uninspiring town that many of us knew several years ago has been relegated to memory. This competition is conceptually based on community effort, and one hopes that because the Dundalk entry is organised at council level, the contribution of private individuals - householders, shopkeepers - is not reduced; certainly the involvement of people in residential areas seems to be, if anything, increased, through your competitions. There are still a great many mass-produced signs which give an untidy appearance to what are really very handsome central streets. A few small points noted at second adjudication in early August: litter was quite conspicuous at Hoey's Lane, at the north end of the Long Walk and in O'Hanlon Park; there are still some scruffy 'corners' such as (almost opposite) Ladywell Terrace and still some dereliction particularly in the northern part of the town. Generally, however, the feeling is of optimism and progress - smart factory and office developments are quite skillfully sited, paving and street furniture is vastly improved over even five years ago, grassed spaces are well maintained, municipal flower arrangements are attractive and new sculpture is decorative and amusing. Further manifestations of your sensitive approach are eagerly awaited.