

Tidy Towns Competition 2003

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ashbourne**

Ref: **310**

County: **Meath**

Mark: **197**

Category: **E**

Date: **24/06/2003**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2003	Mark Awarded 2002
Overall Developmental Approach	50	36	36
The Built Environment	40	28	27
Landscaping	40	32	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	14	14
Litter Control	40	21	20
Tidiness	20	13	12
Residential Areas	30	22	21
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	24	24
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	197	192

Overall Developmental Approach:

The Committee is thanked for their entry into this year's Tidy Towns Competition. While this entry contained a well completed Entry Form, there was no Town Plan or three-year Programme of Works included. These documents are of great help to the Adjudicator in seeing the work being done and it should also be of benefit to the Committee in monitoring their yearly programme. The Committee's liaison work with the County Council, the Meath Leader Programme, the local groups such as Chamber of Commerce and other organisations and, in particular, the school children of the local schools, has been most interesting and they should be congratulated on this work. It is very important to continue this liaison work with the various groups mentioned above as they can give invaluable help and advice to the Committee.

The Built Environment:

Ashbourne was a small village on the N2, with a long main street. Over the years it has been subjected to increasing heavy through-traffic, both trucks and cars, that at times seemed to overwhelm it. Thankfully some of this traffic has moved onto the M1 motorway and the village should now return to its relatively calm situation. It has, however, retained its village character. The Committee can now proceed with their three-year Programme of Works (if the Adjudicator will be told of this programme) without the constant noise pollution and traffic dangers. The village is now experiencing a very rapid expansion in population, with housing groups of single homes and apartments. Also many service industries have moved in. All this is putting a tremendous strain on

the Tidy Towns Committee in trying to cope with this expansion. In relation to apartments there is very much less interest by the residents in their surroundings. The possible solution would be to create distinct residential associations, with Competitions for the development of public open spaces and other amenity areas around these buildings. They should also be encouraged to join in the Tidy Towns initiative.

Landscaping:

There are many charming smaller landscaped areas throughout the village and these help to give the village its village character. The Committee is to be congratulated on this encouragement to owners. Two very fine grounds are the Church and the Ashbourne Hotel. Both are very well maintained and add much to the appearance of main street. Possibly the Committee could organise a Competition for the further visual improvement of main street, by using window boxes and hanging baskets, hopefully sponsored by some local business interest. The Broadmeadow river should, in the future, when building around it stops, be an outstanding landscape feature, with planting and a riverside walk with small bridges, weirs, etc.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

There was no information in the Entry Form on the Committee's approach to wildlife conservation, other than the Committee is keeping an eye on the Broadmeadow river. Possibly the Committee should contact ENFO and obtain some of the very fine publications they produce on wildlife conservation.

Litter Control:

There was no litter on main street on the day of the adjudication and the Committee is to be congratulated on this achievement. However, there was litter along the Broadmeadow river which was due to nearby building works. Again on the northern end of town, in construction areas, there was unnecessary litter. This is a temporary phase, but nevertheless the contractors must contribute to keeping Ashbourne free of this type of litter. Though no recycling unit was seen there may have been one. If there is none, the Committee should ask for one from the County Council.

Tidiness:

Though there is still heavy traffic trundling through the village, Ashbourne is a pleasant and tidy and against many odds the Committee is to be congratulated. Though it may not happen in Ashbourne, it is worth mentioning that there is a tendency, during the school summer holidays, to neglect the school grounds. It is important that the pupils should be organised to keep the grass cut and to pick up windblown litter and to keep the adjoining verges, kerbing and the bases of walls free of weeds.

Residential Areas:

There are some delightful single home gardens, both on the approach roads into the village and within the village itself. It is very important that there would be at least one member from each of the residential areas on the Committee.

It is suggested that the Committee should organise two related Competitions, one for single gardens throughout the village and within the housing estates (which could include buildings that have no front gardens but which could use window boxes and floral hanging baskets), and the other Competition should be for housing estates judged as a total unit. There are so many housing units of various sorts being built in Ashbourne at the moment, that these two Competitions would be very important in drawing new residents into the Tidy Towns Competition and encouraging them to participate in village life. Perhaps, the Committee should also consider the creation of a mulch or composting banks in suitable locations for the collection of grass cuttings, leaves, etc. The compost could then be used by groups within the village.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The entrance roads into Ashbourne need attention in the treatment of the verges and signage. If the cutting of the wide verges, in places, is onerous, they could be reduced to a width of one and a half metres which would be sufficient to cut, and the remaining uncut grasses could be left as a contrast, with possibly wild flowers either encouraged or sown. The area could then be left to blend into the adjoining hedgerows and be an added (and safe) habitat for fauna.

General Impression:

Ashbourne is a relatively small and pleasant village that will, undoubtedly, develop into a small town due to the continuous influx of new residents. It is recognised that this will present problems for the Committee to plan and organise for this expansion. There is much to do still on main street and the future development of a linear park along the Broadmeadow river. The Adjudicator looks forward to both of these challenges being tackled in future submissions.