

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Bailieborough**

Ref: **21**

County: **Cavan**

Mark: **148**

Category: **D**

Date: **29/06/2005**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2005 | Mark Awarded 2004 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Overall Developmental Approach | 50 | 20 | |
| The Built Environment | 40 | 22 | |
| Landscaping | 40 | 21 | |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 30 | 13 | |
| Litter Control | 40 | 19 | |
| Tidiness | 20 | 12 | |
| Residential Areas | 30 | 17 | |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 40 | 19 | |
| General Impression | 10 | 5 | |
| TOTAL MARK | 300 | 148 | |

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to warmly welcome Bailieborough to the Tidy Towns Competition and wish the new committee of 10 people every possible success in the future. It is important to Tidy Towns to have Cavan County represented in this prestigious competition so we are delighted that Bailieborough has decided to get involved. As this is your first year, I should explain that the purpose of this report each year is to identify those elements of the town that the adjudicator considers has real future potential under each of the various categories, while also pointing out aspects that would need to be addressed straightway. It is recognised that the committee alone would not be in a position to carry out all the work itself, so where an aspect that is criticised falls under the remit of another organisation, such as Eircom or the ESB, the implication is that the committee would set about putting pressure on those bodies to resolve the matter rather than do the work itself. In this way, the committee acts as effective town representatives, as well as doing its own work on the ground.

To do this really well and in a coordinated fashion, and also score highly in the competition, you will need to put in place a work programme or 3 to 5 year plan. Additional marks will be awarded for including this in your entry form documentation. It is of course clearly understood that your committee could not be expected to have produced such a plan since your welcome formation in April last, however you should now be putting the platform in place for next year. The purpose of this plan will be to guide the work of the committee and those assisting you over the short to medium term by establishing annual work objectives against which progress can be measured by both yourselves and the adjudicators. It need not be more than seven to ten pages long. Patient

implementation of this plan will pay dividends in future years.

In addition, successful Tidy Towns Committees harness the goodwill, skills and experience of a number of different groups and agencies in their locality including –

- GAA & other sports bodies
- FAS
- County Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local SuperValu outlet
- LEADER Company
- The CLAR Programme (if you are in a CLAR designated area)
- Local School or schools

With a clear plan and these agencies on board, Bailieborough will have a fine future in Tidy Towns.

The Built Environment:

Bailieborough has a fine really wide main street that has a lot of character. Some attractive stone buildings were noted such as the upper floors of Swift Travel. Turning Heads is another building that caught the eye. The simple clean, crisp and clear shop name sign is very effective. Nearby the Bailie Hotel has a fine front elevation to the main street. Thankfully it has no projecting signs and uses a good colour combination, and the flowers add a good splash of colour. A few buildings with tiled frontages were noted. These reflect a design concept from an earlier time and do not necessarily fit so well into a modern street-scape. A few buildings in the town need to be repainted, while a number appear to have been re-painted recently. The stone-cut Library building, probably the old Market House, is a fine building located in an attractive small square set back from the street. With a little work this small square area could be a key feature of your main street. Have you considered replacing some of the shop front signs in the town with signs that use more traditional materials such as timber and hand-painted lettering. This could be approached on a co-operative basis. Projecting advertising signs were noted in the main street, in some of the side streets and in a number of back lanes and this needs attention. The issue is how many of these signs are really essential from a commercial point of view? A few derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of your town. However there is a way in which perhaps you can make a feature of these buildings pending their removal or restoration. Try and get the owners to agree that they will blank out the window and door openings with heavy waterproof Marine plywood. This should then be painted matt black, and window bars and door panels painted in white. This approach as a temporary measure can look quite effective. A very attractive brick property was noted at the top of the main street. In Barrack Street a long green partly vacant building needs attention and hopefully there are suitable development plans for this site. Have you considered trying to encourage the use of the Irish language on some of your shop fronts? There is a special award in the Competition that includes the use of the Irish language.

Landscaping:

The many hanging baskets and flower tubs add a great sense of colour to Bailieborough, especially in the main street area. On the approach roads it should be possible to develop additional landscaped areas that will add to the welcome that the visit gets to Bailieborough. In many villages several small landscaped areas may be more effective visually than one large area that which may be difficult to maintain. If you are considering developing new landscaped areas, do keep the issue of on-going maintenance in mind. Also make sure that all builders are incorporating landscaped areas into their future developments. Ideally this should be secured by way of the planning permission requirements laid down by the Local Authority Planning Department.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

In many towns and villages this is an aspect of the Tidy Towns Competition where there can be significant potential for development. All towns have the presence of wildlife to some degree. It is

important that your Tidy Towns Committee would examine the wildlife potential, and see what you can achieve in terms of making your area even more wildlife friendly. The starting point is to have a habitat survey carried out in your area. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, canals, reed marsh, bogs
- Woodland habitats – forests, hedgerows, plantations, parks
- Grassland habitats – roadside verges, parks, wet meadows, dry grasslands

The Survey should produce a species list for each of the habitats relevant to your area. This need not be an expensive survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable person locally who might undertake this task for you. It should be remembered that to carry out the survey properly, it will probably take a year or so to ensure the habitats are assessed at different times. Once completed, your next step would be to draft a straight forward plan to preserve the identified habitats and investigate the possibility of creating new ones. And once identified, the provision of some weather proof and vandal proof display panels, illustrating and explaining the wildlife in your area could be considered. This has been done very successfully in many towns and villages in Ireland. It is most important to try and involve your local school children in this project, and in many schools there are teachers who may have an interest in this area and would be willing to get involved.

Litter Control:

Litter on the day of adjudication was generally below the average standard and litter was noted in quite a number of different localities. These included many parts of the main street, the Cavan end of Church Street, and on New Road. The concept of having regular clean up days / evenings is excellent - perhaps one every two weeks might be considered. This should form part of an overall litter control plan which could include such issues as the role of your local schools and adequacy of litter bins. For instance, it is most important that litter bins are placed in close proximity to the largest generators of litter and regular emptying of a litter bins is essential.

Tidiness:

Quite a number of property boundary walls along the main street or road need to be painted. Road boundary walls need to be painted much more frequently than the main building to which they refer. The adjudicator is not in favour of the display of retail goods on the pavement as was noted here. Apart from looking rather untidy such displays can cause major difficulties for people in wheelchairs or the visually disabled. At St. Anne's School the railings need to be partially replaced and all railings re-painted. The area at the back of the main street between that and New Road was quite untidy in some parts, and tidying of screening is urgently recommended. Undeveloped vacant sites can look quite untidy and should be screened from public view pending development. One such site is located opposite Elm Court housing estate.

Residential Areas:

It might be a good idea to see if the various residents associations and estate groups would be prepared to organise and run a 'Best Kept Estate' competition with the full involvement of the Tidy Towns Committee. This would make a major contribution to the overall presentation of estates in Bailieborough. Your local authority may also run a county competition and supports may be available from them if you take part. Generally the presentation of estates and other residential property was quite high and this is the situation in many towns and villages through County Cavan and surrounding counties. Watch out for the necessary painting of road boundary walls and especially the gable ends of properties. Good landscaping sets off any property and many examples of high level landscaping were noted. However residents should be encouraged to develop landscaping that will not bring high maintenance demands in the future.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The overall presentation of all approach roads is of critical importance. It is this that gives the first impression of your town. Attractive well presented approach roads give a great impression of a community that cares about how others see them. Where there is a wide verge on one or both sides of an approach road best practice indicates that only about 1 metre of the grass verge in from the road should be cut on a regular basis. This applies to verges that are about two metres or more in width. The rest of the verge area should be kept wild to allow for the needs of wildlife. However you will still need to pay attention to this area. In general you should not let this area get too overgrown and untidy. Watch out also for litter that may get trapped by the long grass on this part of your verge. Some towns and villages have verges that have been cut but the cut grass has not been taken away. The result is an untidy appearance with new grass growth trying to grow through the dead cut grass. Can you make a rule for yourselves and your helpers that all cut grass must be taken away on the day that it is cut. Do remember also that verges will need to be cut on quite a regular basis if you are to achieve a lush green well kept appearance of banks and roadside verges. A tractor and mower will not give the neat well kept appearance that can be achieved by a motor mower. A frequent problem with approach roads is that there is no road kerb to divide the road surface from the grass verge. A frequent result of this is that verges get badly damaged by parked vehicles. This is a problem especially where the grass verges are wide. Do talk to your Local Authority Engineer about this difficulty. If kerbing looks out of place in your rural setting then perhaps large stones can be used by the Local Authority to define the edge of the roadway. Do make sure that any old stone walls on approach roads are not in need of repair. Gaps due to collapse can look quite untidy. Fences should be kept in good repair and do cut long grass that may tend to grow up through the timber fencing. Hedging on approach roads needs trimming from time to time but do avoid bird nesting time of the year. It is important to wash the town name signs from time to time and make sure that any poles used for such signs are painted. Likewise try and get the Local Authority to repaint the poles used for Speed Limit Signs. Speed limit signs also need to be washed on a regular basis. The poles that support these signs should also be painted by the Local Authority. Field gates can become a feature of your approach roads. It may be possible for you to get agreement from the relevant landowners that all damaged gates will be replaced, and that all gates will be painted to a common colour scheme. Remember that back streets and lanes are also investigated by Tidy Towns adjudicators and you can lose marks if they are poorly presented. Watch out for weed growth at the base of walls.

General Impression:

Bailieborough is a most welcome new entrant to the Tidy Towns Competition. This is a town with a lot of potential, and hopefully the committee will incorporate many of the suggestions made in this report into the Tidy Towns Action Plan. The marking of any new entry is always difficult, and especially so when the committee has had no opportunity to undertake any significant works for the competition this year. Your marks for 2006 will be adjusted in the light of progress that you make between June 2005 and May 2006. Good luck with all your future work!