

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kingscourt**

Ref: **425**

County: **Cavan**

Mark: **163**

Category: **C**

Date: **29/06/2005**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2005 | Mark Awarded 2004 |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Overall Developmental Approach | 50 | 23 | |
| The Built Environment | 40 | 20 | |
| Landscaping | 40 | 24 | |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 30 | 12 | |
| Litter Control | 40 | 24 | |
| Tidiness | 20 | 10 | |
| Residential Areas | 30 | 23 | |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 40 | 21 | |
| General Impression | 10 | 6 | |
| TOTAL MARK | 300 | 163 | |

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Kingscourt back to the Tidy Towns Competition. Your last entry appears to have been in 2001 when Kingscourt was awarded 168 marks out of a possible 300. We wish your committee of 16 people well as they continue their work with the various Tidy Towns supporting agencies.

All towns and villages are required to have a simple straight forward 3 –5 Year Tidy Towns Plan for their area. This Plan is prepared by your Committee in consultation with the appropriate local organisations. It should be no more than seven to ten pages long. The purpose of the Plan is to guide the work of your Tidy Towns Committee and others over the short to medium term. The plan should indicate year by year your various objectives in regard to Tidy Towns. Be clear and specific in your aims.

The really successful Tidy Towns Committees are those that succeed in harnessing the goodwill, skills and experience of a number of different groups and Agencies that have something to contribute to the implementation of the 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan. These groups and Agencies include the following –

- GAA
- Local Development Association
- 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
- Urban & Village Renewal Grant Scheme

The Built Environment:

Kingscourt has an extremely wide main street and the maturing trees running down the centre together with the planted areas between trees helps to link the town into its rural surroundings. Some interesting buildings caught the eye on adjudication day and this included the two stored thatched Cartlan's premises. The adjudicator nominated this property for the national Tidy Towns Heritage Award. At Peppard's a good use of colour was noted together with attractive window boxes.

In Kingscourt there is a great mix of shop fronts from the very modern to the much older and a great variation in standards. Have you thought of running a shop-fronts competition with the objective of encouraging people to improve their shop-front? Some properties also require painting. At the Fire Station the road boundary walls would be greatly improved with painting. The Catholic Church was presented to a high standard and the unusual approach to the church from St. Mary's road is an unusual feature. The Garda Station was neatly presented tucked away in the landscaping (natural?). Another building that caught the eye was St. Mary's Hall with the interesting flights of stairs on both sides of the main elevation.

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 a number of back lanes in the town centre 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 / village. 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.

At the Church of Ireland the fine stone wall by the road is an eye catching feature.

On the main street consideration might be given to the planting of trees on both sides of the road in an effort to break up the continuous car parking spaces into smaller sections separated by trees and landscaping.

Landscaping:

The many hanging baskets, flower tubs and window boxes were very colourful and added much to the visual appearance of Kingscourt. The Station road roundabout was quite colourful with the circular flower display. It is a pity that space does not allow a repeat of this layout at one of the other roundabouts.

Fine grassed areas were noted at Kingspan on the Station road, while at Gilmore's the sloping bank of grass was impressive. The low wall at the top here might be painted, and a raised flower bed in the grassy slope below would add some additional colour. Other landscaped areas in the town contributed to an attractive overall presentation.

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 and villages 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.

If you have not already done so, the starting point is to have a habitat Survey carried out of the wildlife 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 in one of your Schools who might undertake this task for you. Basically the Survey would identify the animals, plants, birds, fish that inhabit your area and their associated habitats. It should be remembered that to carry out the Survey properly that it will probably take a year so that all habitats can be assessed at different time of the year.

Using the results of the Wildlife Survey your next step should be do draft a straight forward Plan to preserve the identified habitats in your area, and investigate the possibility of new ones. For example perhaps there is an old Pond in your area that is disused, but with a little work could be an important area for wildfowl.

It is most important to try and involve your local school children in this project, and in many Schools there is probably a teacher who may have an interest in this area who would be willing to get involved.

As part of the actions to be undertaken in your Wildlife Plan you might like to consider the provision of some weather proof and vandal proof display panels, illustrating and explaining the wildlife in your area. This has been done very successfully in many towns and villages in Ireland.

Litter Control:

Extra litter bins have been provided and generally in the main street area litter control was quite good on adjudication day. Litter was however noted on some approach roads and beyond the Mount St. Joseph's National School. Frequent litter collections outside of the core areas of the town are required in order to keep these other areas litter free. It may be worth while organising litter clean up evenings, perhaps every second week if the Scouts and Cubs are not undertaking this already.

Tidiness:

The road beyond the Paramount property was quite untidy and quite a number of untidy open spaces were noted in various locations off approach roads. The view from the Station approach road to the back of some of the main street premises was a little untidy and this might be examined as a 2006 project. A number of the approach roads looked quite untidy because of the lack of verge and bank cutting but this is covered in a later section of this report. Small areas that are awaiting development can often look quite untidy and in some instances it may be possible to screen these from public view pending development.

Residential Areas:

A lot of new development was noted in Kingscourt. Ard Dun has an attractive entrance area off the main road, and the long sloping bank at the back of this estate could be cut and landscaped. Good fencing and planting is a strong feature of Fairymount Avenue. Good landscaping at the entrance to Oak Grove estate was somewhat let down by the uncut open grass area inside. The concept of a competition between the various housing estates is excellent. This idea has been used in other parts of the country and has worked very well with a great improvements in estate presentation. This concept also helps to develop the sense of local pride that is so important.

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 or village. 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 metres 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.

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 / village 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.

While some work has been done on some approach roads such as the Hall Street approach road, and on Station Road. On other approach roads little recent work appears to have been done in terms of overall presentation of banks and verges.

General Impression:

Kingscourt is a welcome new entrant to the Tidy Towns Competition and your adjudicator wishes your Committee every possible success in the years ahead.

When you are preparing your 3 - 5 Year Action Plan hopefully you will be able to include the recommendations made in this report.