

# Tidy Towns Competition 2005

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mullagh**

Ref: **505**

County: **Cavan**

Mark: **150**

Category: **B**

Date: **29/06/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	22	
The Built Environment	40	19	
Landscaping	40	21	
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	
Litter Control	40	19	
Tidiness	20	10	
Residential Areas	30	15	
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	20	
General Impression	10	6	
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>150</b>	

### Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Mullagh to the 2005 Tidy Towns Competition - you are indeed a most welcome new entry for County Cavan. Congratulations to your School on achieving Green Flag status.

The really 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
- 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

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. This Plan will indicate year by year the objectives for Tidy Towns that you are planning to achieve.

## **The Built Environment:**

Mullagh has a fine wide street where the young trees add much to the overall appearance of the main street. Repairs to footpaths have been undertaken. The stone arches and stone building of the main street are an important architectural feature of the village that must be preserved. Some buildings are in need of painting while many properties seem to have been painted in the recent past. There is an interesting mix of substantial two and three storey properties, and the adjudicator is of the view that many of them were originally faced or built in cut stone.

At the GAA property the gates here need to be replaced or re hung and painted a bright eye catching colour. In the centre of the village the O'Reilly property near the Tennis Courts needs to be painted.

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 on a few properties in the village 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.

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.

Buildings that stand out include the Catholic Church and the fine landscaped grounds and the Heritage Centre just across the road with the fine well kept grass areas.

## **Landscaping:**

The Fair Green area was attractively presented - cobble lock pavements, shrubs in tubs, raised planted flower beds, and seating. The paved area needs to be swept to remove gravel that has accumulated here. The Tennis Courts just behind looked very neat and presentable.

Some additional colour at the small landscaped area in front of the Garda Station is recommended. This can be achieved through the planting of some flowers that will add colour to this area. The Lough Shore area is a beautiful amenity area but it is such a pity that this area is spoiled for the visitor by an overflowing litter bin and litter scattered around the area of the seat. The seat here needs to be repainted. The yellow water lilies in the lake here add their own colour. However in the car parking area the casual weed growth by the boulders needs to be removed.

## **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.

The lake area will obviously play a large part in your wildlife plans.

### **Litter Control:**

It is very important that your Committee would develop a litter control plan for your town / village. The issue of litter control is not an issue just for the Local Authority. All citizens and especially your Tidy Towns Committee have a key role to play. Your plan should include such issues as surveying the litter bins that you have in your community and their adequacy, clean up days and the role of your local schools.

It is most important that litter bins are placed in close proximity to the largest generates of litter. The regular emptying of a litter bins if of course essential.

Quantities of litter was noted at the Kells Road, in various locations on the main street and especially at the Lake Shore amenity area. Some overflowing litter bins were noted and they are not being emptied on a regular enough basis.

### **Tidiness:**

The planning of clean up days is an excellent idea - perhaps one every two weeks on the same day of the week and starting from the same location and at the same time every time. The presentation of the garage area could be improved, and especially that of the Bring Centre area. The siting of the Bring Centre right beside the amenity area of the Tennis Courts is rather puzzling. Consideration should be given to the re-location of the Bring Centre. The access road to the Bring Centre should be improved as it has quite a number of serious pot holes. Watch out also for weed growth at the base of walls and at road kerbing.

Some road boundary walls also need to be painted.

## **Residential Areas:**

Much housing development work was noted in Mullagh. At the estate on the Kingscourt road by the 50 KPH sign the grass strip by the road is very long and needs to be cut. Weedkiller has been used on this estate and the dead grass should be removed as quickly as possible. In Curragh Park not a tree was to be seen. It is important that you would liaise with the Planning Authority to make sure that the provision of acceptable landscaping on all future housing estate developments is underwritten by suitable planning conditions.

## **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.

Some good work has been done on some of your approach roads and the Kingscourt road looked quite attractive with the low stone wall and cut hedges. However work on the verges here could be extended out a little.

## **General Impression:**

Mullagh is an attractive village and it is a very welcome new entrant to the competition. When the committee is drawing up their Action Plan they should consider the various recommendation made in this report, for inclusion in their Plan.

Good luck with all your work in the future!