

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Virginia**

Ref: **745**

County: **Cavan**

Mark: **193**

Category: **D**

Date: **01/07/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	30	
The Built Environment	40	28	
Landscaping	40	25	
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	18	
Litter Control	40	25	
Tidiness	20	14	
Residential Areas	30	22	
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	25	
General Impression	10	6	
TOTAL MARK	300	193	

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Virginia back to the Tidy Towns Competition; the last entry appears to have been in 2000. It was approximately 40 years ago in 1964 and 1965 when Virginia was the National Winner of the Tidy Towns Competition, then in it's infancy.

A detailed document on projects undertaken by by Virginia Tidy Towns was submitted with the entry form but no indication was given as to whether all these works were done for the 2005 competition alone, or undertaken over the past few years. The Development Plan document submitted likewise did not give any time-scale.

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 detail year by the tasks to be undertaken by the committee and others.

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

On visiting Virginia the adjudicator is given the impression, perhaps incorrectly, that no Local Authority Area Plan for Virginia has been prepared. This is a town with much potential that deserves a strategic approach to local environmental development.

The Built Environment:

Virginia is a planned town with a fine wide street and many trees that gives much character to the area. The location on the heavily trafficked busy main Cavan Dubin road makes the work of the Tidy Towns committee even more difficult. The main project appears to be the new work at the road junction in the centre of the town. The fine stone buildings in the town caught the eye; for example those in the James Matthew row. These buildings add much character to the street-scape. Other items of interest include the porch of the Riverfront Hotel, an old feature that should be preserved. There are a number of shop-fronts in the town that are in need of updating. 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. The introduction of a shop-fronts competition might be a way of generating additional interest in shop-front improvements in Virginia.

Projecting advertising signs were noted on a number of premises 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? 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.

The Catholic Church is an interesting building from a design point of view with a high sloping roof towards the road. Likewise the Ramor Theatre building frontage is unusually and probably reflects a previous use of this building.

Landscaping:

The hanging baskets, flower tubs and window boxes in many locations in Virginia add much colour to the town, and the young trees on the upper end of the town help to reflect the surrounding countryside. The trees in the general area of the Church of Ireland property are really superb and add so much to the town. The new town centre piece will be interesting when completed. What a pity that plans of this development were not included with the entry documentation. The stonework here is of a high standard and the warm colour of the stone most appropriate. Additional landscaping of all approach roads would be a welcome development that could be undertaken over a number of years.

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 Shore car parking area was such a disappointment. Here litter control was very bad, together with damaged seating and timber fencing in need of repair and painting. This is potentially a very attractive area.

The river at both sides of the river bridge looked quite untidy and some cleaning here would make a big difference.

Litter Control:

The provision of the new litter bins was noted. 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 all litter bins if of course essential.

Litter control generally was not good especially outside of the core area of the town. Bad litter was noted at the Bailieborough road junction, the grass area at the entrance to Yew Park, the approach to the lake shore, the Lake Shore area, and the general area of the bridge and Theatre.

Tidiness:

The plans to underground cables will make a great visual improvement to Virginia when implemented. The most untidy area area was the Lake Shore car parking area and the problems here have been detailed above. Incidental open spaces can become untidy very quickly and a number of these were noted. Screening is one possibility pending development.

Residential Areas:

Much new housing development in and around Virginia was noted. Many private individual houses caught the eye, and many property owners have carried out extensive landscaping works. All these individual efforts are very important in the overall context of the presentation of Virginia. Off the Baillieborough road the estate on the left has an older part that was a little untidy. Here casual long grass and weed growth at road areas needs to be removed from the edge of kerbs and boundary walls. Little landscaping was evident in the newer part of the estate. At the Drumlins estate the attractive colourful landscaping and planting at the entrance area did not follow through into the estate. At Yew Park estate the grass areas at the entrance need to be cut frequently. The young trees here were looking well on adjudication day.

It is important that your committee would discuss with the Local Authority to issue of an acceptable level of landscaping for all new housing estate developments in your town. This can probably best be handled through Planning Permission Conditions.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The standard of the approach roads was quite mixed. The Cavan and Ballyjamesduff approach roads looked quite well, though on the Cavan approach road some road kerbing may be necessary to mark the edge of the roadway. On the Kells approach the low stone walls and the fine hedging provide an impressive appearance to the approach road. Little work appeared to have been carried out recently on the Mullagh or Baillieborough approach roads.

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.

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.

General Impression:

A planned approach to the environmental development of Virginia is required. The Tidy Towns Action Plan will help when annual targets have been agreed, together with the suggested Local Authority Area Plan for the town.