

Tidy Towns Competition 2004

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Birr**

Ref: **714**

County: **Offaly**

Mark: **226**

Category: **D**

Date: **03/06/2004**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2004	Mark Awarded 2003
Overall Developmental Approach	50	32	32
The Built Environment	40	34	34
Landscaping	40	33	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	20	19
Litter Control	40	30	28
Tidiness	20	16	16
Residential Areas	30	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	28	28
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	226	223

Overall Developmental Approach:

Thank you for your entry and map. You do not say if you are working to a phased plan. Perhaps your committee might formulate one for next year. Such a plan would enable you to motivate the community into action. It will also prove beneficial in encouraging other agencies to get involved in Tidy Towns. A town the size of Birr needs good community backing. As a relatively new committee, you will need the good will of all the relevant agencies to progress further.

The Built Environment:

Birr is almost unique in Ireland with such a plethora of classic period buildings, superb landscapes, attractive rivers and a host of monuments. As a Georgian town with heritage status expectations are higher than normal, so you need to ensure its development is in accordance with the character of the town. This is very relevant in the current economic climate that creates development at an unprecedented rate. New buildings in particular should blend in well with existing ones and be in sympathy with their surrounds. The County Arms Hotel is undergoing a major development which has necessitated the felling of some mature trees. It is hoped that a tree-planting replacement programme will be applied as part of the new development. The Birr Technology Centre in Brendan St., is superb and has been nominated for a heritage award in the competition. The restoration of the former mill is a classic example of good restoration. You also have a good deal of urban infill that is adding to the development of the town. For the most part, these developments are in good taste, so well done.

Landscaping:

Landscaping throughout the town is of a high quality. The small park near the AIB is superb and was being planted on adjudication day. The colour here is exquisite and sets the scene for the town. The monument of the third Earl of Rosse would benefit from a clean-up and you might include this as part of next year's programme. The tree planting at Emmet Square is good and should be extended to O'Connell St. Indeed you should examine the 'new' trees planted in O'Connell St., Dublin: a similar scheme could be applied to Birr. There was good example of individual effort throughout the town and many individuals have gone to great trouble to present their premises to a high standard. Tree planting on the Tullamore Road is good and will further enhance with the passing of time. Of course the great array of mature trees in and around Birr Castle is acknowledged. The landscaping of the estate is well acknowledged and provides a great showpiece for the town.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You, more than most, have potential for the promotion of wildlife. The suggestion to create a wildlife at Camcor Park is commendable and should be pursued. This is best done in association with the educational institutions of the town. A wildlife project for school pupils should be pursued. Also, illustrations of wildlife on display boards would stimulate interest in the bird life of the area.

Litter Control:

Litter control is everybody's business and this is very much a community project. Recycling depots are now plentiful and beneficial in disciplining litter control. Throughout the town, litter control was good on adjudication day and this is commendable. However, you do have a problem with litter accumulating at the river arches, one of which is actually blocked up. Bridges of this quality are now precious exhibits of architecture and deserve a high standard of presentation.

Tidiness:

Your problems here relate to a number of derelict and unoccupied premises and also some poorly presented industrial yards and open spaces. The surface area in the car parks is poor and needs attention. Entrances to commercial premises need to be presented to a high standard.

Residential Areas:

The standard of residential areas is good throughout. Many fine gardens are show pieces on the approach roads and present a good image for the town. The housing estate adjacent to the Livestock mart is well presented but has no name plate. All housing estates should be named and appropriate bilingual signs erected. Also street names should be legible and well placed: there is a weakness in the town in this respect. Some of the former estate houses opposite St. Brendan's Community school are in need of improved presentation. Compton Row terraced houses are unique and distinctive and worthy of high standard presentation.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Street signage is poor and some is in need of repair. The signs at the monument in Emmet Square are poor in design and layout: indeed the monument is drab and needs improvement. The surrounds of the monument need to be brightened up by appropriate landscaping. Back areas are now an integral part of the competition and need to be presented to a high standard. In Birr, many back areas have very distinctive areas deserving of good presentation. Some are now being brought into 21st century use and this is commendable. The restoration work at the Maltings has been impressive but the terraced houses fronting the street now need painting. Dolans old petrol pumps on O'Connell St., should be removed and the premises restored: this is one of your black spots. The Chestnut is excellent with attractive hanging baskets.

General Impression:

Once again, it was a pleasure to visit Birr and witness so many new developments. As mentioned at the outset, new developments need to be in keeping with the character of the town. Birr is one of the show pieces of 19th century architecture and deserving of its heritage status. As a community it behoves you to ensure it progresses in a planned and favourable way. Good luck in your endeavours.