

Tidy Towns Competition 2004

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Athlone**

Ref: **599**

County: **Westmeath**

Mark: **210**

Category: **F**

Date: **16/06/2004**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2004	Mark Awarded 2003
Overall Developmental Approach	50	39	38
The Built Environment	40	32	31
Landscaping	40	32	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	20	19
Litter Control	40	22	22
Tidiness	20	12	12
Residential Areas	30	22	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	24	24
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	210	206

Overall Developmental Approach:

Thank you for your application form, map and 2004-2006 comprehensive development plan all of which is very well presented. Congratulations to the Committee on the amount achieved to date. It is disappointing to note that there are only 5 members on the Tidy Towns Committee for a town of Athlone's size and population. While the close liaison with agencies is noted, one would imagine that a larger committee with representatives from the various residential areas, schools, businesses, etc. would be very beneficial to the committee in tackling a town of this size. Try to involve more people in the Committee to help share the workload.

The Built Environment:

There is a mixture of some finely presented premises and some dreadful ones. Biddy Mulligans, Behans Veg, Paddy Powers and Rayners bar looks well in the centre of the town. The Midland Health Board building on the Coosan road is very drab and needs some attention. The IDA Business Park is a fine example and it is hoped that when development work is completed on the Shannon Regional Park it too will be impressive. In general the Business Parks and Industrial areas were very well presented and maintained. The new retail area on the left as you approach the town from the college has potential for improvement - however, while shop fronts are well finished the general area is bare and grey looking. Main Street is a mix of derelict and unused buildings and some very well kept areas. It is hoped the centre will be revitalised as the town develops. The Civic building is very impressive and one looks forward to its completion. The new Prince of Wales and Radisson Hotels

are welcome additions to the streetscape and hopefully will breath life back into the centre of the town. Kilmartin's Retail area is extremely busy is very well kept St. Mary Church area looks well - and there is a lovely (gift) shop front in the square. The Wall area along the river bank looks well. The area around the Castle is very well presented and the Connaght side of town is developing well near the riverside. It is hoped that this will continue throughout the length of the street as there are are still some poor enough areas particularly at the upper end of it. The Bank of Ireland beside the Garda Station is very untidy looking with lots of weeds present. There is a lot of construction and restoration work taking place on the built environment throughout the town; this type of work will greatly enhance the town over the coming years and help gain valuable marks.

Landscaping:

The landscaping of the town is again a mixture of good and bad, however it is good to note from the plan that there is a comprehensive focus on this area of the competition. It is also good to see (page 3 of plan) that landscaping efforts are being made throughout the town and that the immediate focus is being placed on some of the key focal points, e.g. the Bridge, the Marina, St Mary's Square, etc. The ambitious hanging basket campaign is an excellent means of immediately improving the impression of the town and is to be commended. The proposed additional planting will be very helpful in linking or consolidating the entire town. Areas already developed such as Burgess Park and the Castle area look well and continue to be well maintained. The proposed Front Garden competition is a good idea and one which will hopefully initiate the rising tide syndrome throughout Athlone! Again as your proposals come into fruition and current areas of construction are completed and landscaped, the entire town will begin to look much more attractive. Continued good luck with your well planned endeavours.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

New Burgess Park and Play area are well maintained and the information boards are informative and look well. Again the commitment of the Tidy Towns Committee is to be commended in efforts such as the supervision of the Callows Wildlife area during nesting. Well done! There is no mention of the schools involvement in this category- are they involved? It is noted that many are registered for the Green Flag Initiative and that some have already achieved it, try to get them more involved with your wildlife development. It will pay dividends. The further development of Wansboro Park is welcome and the commitment and support of the Town Council is noted. Good Work being done in this category.

Litter Control:

Despite the huge efforts being made by the committee to win this battle, litter control though greatly improved is still a problem for the town. On the Sunday of the visit, a bin opposite the college was overflowing, the Recycling area in front of Valley Court estate was very untidy - bin overflowing and lots of dumping. The Golden Island Shopping centre area was also very poor, with overflowing bins and a dreadful recycling area. There was litter evident throughout the town -very disappointing. Hopefully the litter warden and initiatives such as the 'Children of Litter' outlined in your plan will have a growing impact as enforcement and education combine in the ongoing battle for the town.

Tidiness:

The Golden Island Shopping area car park is untidy with overgrown grass and filthy looking trolley bays roofs (grass is growing out of them). Connaught Street still has Christmas decorations straddling the street. Derelict buildings are a problem throughout. Several outlying areas of the town are still untidy with verges needing attention. There is Graffiti on signs on the by-pass, off Garrycastle road. At Ganleys/Roscommon Road there is a lot of work taking place which is spoiling the entrance to the town. In general, there is a lot of construction taking place in and around the town, but things will undoubtedly improve when this is complete.

Residential Areas:

Willow Park is well landscaped, although some houses need attention. Again, the residential areas are a mix of very well and dreadfully kept estates. There is a nice grotto area in Battery Heights and a few very well kept houses, but in general this area needs attention. Quite a number of boarded up houses and a lot of litter. Woodlands Grove, Woodville, Retreat, Auburn Heights and Cartrontrouy are generally well presented. The newer estates are nicely developed and landscaped, e.g. Ard na Glug. Apartments/Townhouses in the Peters Port area need repainting. Residential areas in the Coosan direction are generally well maintained. Hopefully the planned competition for front gardens will encourage residents; if successful this could be extended to include house painting and best kept residential area? Your efforts to encourage Residents Associations to maintain their green areas and the work of the council in sweeping the roads in estates can be built upon. Try to get more residents involved and actively working with you in this area of the competition.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Moate approach looks well and Peter Port area in general looks well, however the bin area at back of Le Chateau could be screened off. The Roscommon road, particularly around the old train station, could do with some work. A bench needs replacing on the river bank opposite barracks area. The park area opposite Shamrock Lodge is terribly overgrown with lots of litter present. Connaught Street has a lot of derelict buildings which look awful, particularly when what can be achieved can be seen in buildings like Garbz and Savory Fare. North Gate Street area and Abbey road look very well. Montree approach area needs attention. Assumption road is good. The Bower School area looks a little run down. The Marist grounds look well. The Roundabout at the Crescent has place for some hanging baskets but none were present on the day of inspection. For a town the size of Athlone, this is a difficult category. The work being done in relation to bilingual signs, traffic calming and car parking areas is very good and will have a longer term positive impact on the town-well done!

General Impression:

Although great work is being done by the committee, the town unfortunately looked untidy on the day of inspection. Allowance has been made, however, for the amount of ongoing development and construction work currently taking place. Litter is still a big problem for the town and some of the residential areas needs attention. Continued good luck to all involved.