

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Arklow**

Ref: **127**

County: **Wicklow**

Mark: **237**

Category: **E**

Date: **10/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	40	38
The Built Environment	40	30	30
Landscaping	40	35	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	26	25
Litter Control	40	29	30
Tidiness	20	17	17
Residential Areas	30	24	23
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	29	29
General Impression	10	7	7
TOTAL MARK	300	237	234

Overall Developmental Approach:

The detailed plan, portfolio of photographs and map supplied with the entry form was very helpful at adjudication time. This shows the tremendous range of work that the committee is involved in and is very impressive. The 12 member tidy towns action committee has a vast area to cover in Arklow and a recruitment for new members would seem to be necessary now with the huge increase in housing in and around the town.

There is a wide diversity of interests and developments in the town and working with residents committees and community groups, as well as local businesses and public authorities are essential to making substantial progress in the town. The plan pinpoints very many relevant areas and is a good focus for the future.

The Built Environment:

Business premises along the main street have improved considerably over the past few years – the level of presentation and décor looking bright and fresh. There are a number that require attention and these become more noticeable as the standard rises. The railway station looks well – the work on killing weeds and vegetation along the wall leading to the station was noted. The Courthouse looks especially well with its pleasant frontage – this together with the space to the front of the landmark church across the street forms a very attractive town centre. This could be improved by prohibiting parking in the areas in front of the church and tourist information office. The bandstand area and old graveyard base forms an important part of the built environment of the town. The

credit union, Garda station and ambulance station make an attractive complex of buildings and are helped greatly by the landscaping. The Maritime museum is in bad need of repainting. Marlborough Hall and the St Mary's Court buildings look well. The Church of Ireland on the Coolgreaney road looks very imposing and the grounds are well cared for. The face of Arklow has changed with the inclusion of new styles of building at the dockland areas and the enormous number of residential developments. The supermarkets Lidl and Tesco have also been added to the town. Some remaining difficult sites on the Wexford road require a solution. The industrial area off the Coolgreaney Road adds a further range of buildings to the town. The areas surrounding these industrial buildings require serious landscaping; otherwise they look desolate and surrounded by wilderness. The two buildings of the National Training and Development Institute look really attractive.

Landscaping:

The Knockmore roundabout has improved considerably with the planting and the adjoining segments look well – there are a few areas still remaining that require landscaping and it would be great to see the complete roundabout and all the surrounding segments landscaped. The Courthouse is very attractively presented with the containerised summer colour plantings. The landscaping at the Garda station, credit union and ambulance area look very well and illustrate the huge impact that good landscaping can have. Planting at the Marina village was noted. The Tesco shopping centre carpark appears to have a difficulty with the maintenance of the landscaped areas, which is a pity as the planting is very good. The Old Abbey park is an interesting landscaped site hidden away from the main area of the town. The wall and entrance are very attractive. Containers at the railways station platform look well – the landscaped bank needs some attention to weeding. The open spaces of many of the housing estates contribute greatly to the overall landscape of the town. Good tree planting and well cared for grass is the essence of a pleasant environment at these locations. The planting at the National Training and Development Institute looks well. Landscaping on the roadside approach to the bypass from the north side of the town gives a lovely impression. A very attractive landscaped site at the beginning of the Vale Road from the town adds a lovely touch. As stated above the industrial area needs a landscape plan urgently. The committee should watch future developments, as normally landscaping is part of the conditions of a planning application. The areas to the back of the Marina Village offer a serious challenge to transform this redundant industrial wasteland.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Amenity Park is a marvelous facility and is well utilised. The work of reed management is very interesting and it is great that such care is taken lest the pond be over run and destroyed. The seating and display boards are helpful. The work of protecting the sand dunes with Marram grass plantations is a marvelous operation and great lessons can be gained from this – a perfect practical learning situation. The involvement of so many people in this project is heartening. The photographs convey the great community spirit that this project engenders. The ladders will be helpful in enabling the Marram grass to establish and stabilise the area. The list of plants and photographs of the flora of the south beach are impressive and represent a very useful study. The Promenade offers a very attractive riverside walk and a nice alternative to walking through the street.

Litter Control:

The continued work on litter management is helpful, however a considerable amount of litter was noted at places in the town – by the bandstand park, the promenade and near the Catholic Church in particular. Litter management requires a continual and consistent effort by everyone in the town. All the campaigns and other forms of encouragement are part of the litter plan. The recycle bins were noted at Tesco and the huge number in the industrial estate. The work with the gum problem is encouraging. Litterbags left by the toilets at the car park opposite the Garda station are unhelpful.

Tidiness:

There is a good degree of tidiness overall in the town. The main street has improved considerably

with the removal of overhead cables and upgrading around the Courthouse. Improvements to business premises contribute well in this regard also. Areas behind Marina Village and the industrial estate present problems as well as the neglected premises on the Wexford road.

Residential Areas:

The many residential areas in Arklow are defined by the style of landscaping at their entrances and the open spaces within. As many of these are new the tree planting will take time to mature and make an important impact. Among the many estates visited some interesting examples are - The Imbhera Mor Park where trees have matured well and look good. At Knockmore estate there is one huge green without a single tree planted. At the Maples there is good tree planting which will take time to mature – some old trees have been retained but because the soil level has been changed these are suffering. Garden competitions and inter-estate competitions are very useful ways of encouraging improvements. The work of the public authorities is of course key to success as well. A watchful eye on both planning applications and the finished product when the buildings are completed is important too. The numbers of older style houses within the town centre give great life to the town and make for a good community spirit. Houses along the Coolgreaney road are attractively presented. Individual care and attention to each house, garden and road frontage contributes to the overall appearance of the entire town and great credit is due to those who care for their properties so well.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The bypass roads have greatly relieved the pressure on the town and consequently the roads are better able to cope with the situation where all the heavy trucks no longer pound down the main street. Road surfaces tend to be patchy in places and improvements would be welcome. Pressurising the town council to upgrade surfaces is part and parcel of committee's work. The roundabout at the Vale Road junction does not appear to have sufficient significance and motorists tend to hesitate there – a better solution would be welcome. Improvements to the carpark at Qualcerain are good. There are a number of back lanes and streets around the town that could be improved.

General Impression:

Very good work is in progress on many fronts - the seashore sand dune developments and the reed curtailment work at the Amenity Park are excellent projects. Litter management, riverside walk and general upgrading of streetscapes form the core of the improvements. The huge amount of housing in itself makes a huge impact on the entire area and the infrastructure needed to cope with this is enormous.

Second Round Adjudication:

Arklow looked quite colourful on the day of 2nd round adjudication, especially in Lower and Upper Main Street. However the selling of commercial advertising space on the otherwise attractive black seats in the town is not especially attractive. Some shop fronts are in need of re-development, as is the corner site at the junction of the road bridge and Main Street. The design of the building to go on this site if re-developed is critically important given its prominent location. The pavement bollards all need to be re-painted and some need repair. The riverside walk is a very attractive feature diminished in overall impact by so much litter noted at 2nd round adjudication. The shopping trolley in the river below the car park / toilet block should be removed. Indeed litter control appears to be a significant problem in Arklow. Some wildlife information panels on the road bridge on both sides would have provided some added interest to this excellent wildlife viewing point.