

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ennis**

Ref: **558**

County: **Clare**

Mark: **279**

Category: **F**

Date: **10/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	49	49
The Built Environment	40	38	37
Landscaping	40	39	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	28	27
Litter Control	40	35	35
Tidiness	20	18	16
Residential Areas	30	28	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	35	34
General Impression	10	9	9
TOTAL MARK	300	279	272

Overall Developmental Approach:

The very detailed submission received from Ennis Tidy Towns Committee is demonstrative of why Ennis has progressed so far in Tidy Towns. The aims and objectives outlined have provided a focus to your activities and a considerable amount of work has been done under every category of the competition. The co-operation between the committee, local authorities, residents associations, schools and the many other groups involved is exemplary and a model for other similar large centres to emulate.

The Built Environment:

The built heritage of Ennis dates back to before 1700 and much of the late medieval town still exists, although partially hidden by more modern buildings. It was good to note that work has taken place to improve access to and awareness of this "older" Ennis. These works include the Riverbank Footpath, Cloughleigh Park, Mill Park and the Town Sculpture Trail. The placing of plaques on historic buildings also helps to highlight the town's rich past. Of course Ennis is now a bustling commercial and cultural centre, and the modern buildings of today reflect this, however it is the traditional shop fronts, such as Seoidin and Collins' Jewelers on O'Connell Street, which add real character to the heart of the town. While there are many signs, it was favourably noted that the use of plastic signage has been much reduced over the years and presumably this trend will continue into the future. Other buildings that impressed were the court house, the fire station, the Old Ground Hotel and the recently refurbished St. Peter & Paul's Cathedral. The busy bus and rail stations were also

nicely presented on the day of adjudication.

Landscaping:

Tree planting on the approach roads and around the town gives the town a sylvan aspect. The fact that the council's landscaping department planted and replaced many more trees this year will continue to build on this worthwhile legacy for future generations. However, some of the trees planted on the Tulla/Quin road look a little poorly and may need some attention. The comprehensive and well maintained landscaping on the approach roads and in the town centre ensures that Ennis looks its best at all times. Exceptional flowerbeds, flower containers and hanging baskets abound throughout and green spaces such as the Tim Smyth Park are equally impressive. The Ballyalla lakeside area on the Ruan approach was well maintained and is a wonderful amenity for the people of Ennis.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The many geese and ducks inhabiting the riverside post office field were a delight to view and are a clear demonstration of the commitment that exists for preserving and cultivating indigenous wild life. The further development of the Fergus River as a natural resource is to be welcomed, and we note that it is a stronghold for many species such as the Atlantic Salmon, Eurasian Otter and Lamprey Eel. All the various planting undertaken throughout the town not only has aesthetic appeal, but is vital for the local wildlife - for example, we spotted a number of Buddleia bushes which attract Butterflies as well as a variety of berried bushes which will feed the birds in the winter.

Litter Control:

The new Litter Management Plan 2005 – 2008 drawn up by Ennis Town Council will assist in focusing people's attention on this aspect of the competition, as no doubt has the issuing of 298 litter fines over the year and the establishment of a "Litter Line" for reporting offences. These initiatives, together with your work with the local schools, will hopefully one day create a litter free Ennis. This year, despite the best efforts of all involved, some was still to be seen in the Town Centre, particularly cigarette butts which were not disposed of in the new litterbins provided. Nonetheless, in view of the size of the town and the throughput of visitors, it has to be said that the litter situation was well contained both in the town and in the suburbs. Well done to all concerned, and in particular for getting so many groups to participate in An Taisce's National Spring Clean campaign.

Tidiness:

Your initiative to involve your local businesses in the committee's activities by encouraging them to sweep outside their premises twice daily, and particularly at closing time, is very worthwhile. The numerous bring bank facilities, door to door recycling initiatives and "dog waste" control campaign are also excellent and have obviously contributed to making Ennis a very tidy town indeed. It was also good to note that the roadsides are very neat and tidy with little or no kerb-side weeds.

Residential Areas:

Your support of Ennis' residents committees in organising local competitions is excellent and would appear to have had the desired affect. The considerable number of housing estates and individual properties throughout the town were mostly well presented and make a real contribution to the overall Tidy Towns effort. The people of Ennis clearly take great pride in looking after their own areas - credit is due to all concerned. We also admired the attractive stone name signs that adorned the entrance to many of these estates.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The initial work on the Ennis Bypass was noted – this project will obviously have an impact on the

town during its construction - but at the end of the day such work is necessary and should bring benefits when completed. This type of work is always taken into consideration during adjudication. We are glad to see that public signage throughout Ennis has improved and the continued upgrading of footpaths was noted. The major re-development planned for the market area sounds exciting and should considerably enhance this site.

General Impression:

Ennis Tidy Towns Committee, in partnership with so many other bodies, is making every effort, on every level, to maximise the potential of what is Clare's County Town. The signage on the road into Ennis marking all the awards Ennis has won over the years - culminating in a Tidy Towns Gold Medal in 2004 - demonstrates better than words the town's very impressive record in Tidy Towns. We trust that this is appreciated by the many people who live and work in the town as much as it is by the many visitors - this one included. We look forward to seeing the undoubted progress that will continue into the years ahead.

Second Round Adjudication:

The high increase in marking proposed by the first adjudicator is unusual at the top level of the competition, yet seems on consideration to be well deserved in the various categories: indeed, there seems to be very little further to go. Congratulations are offered firstly to the residents and business people of the town who have co-operated so well with the committee, and then to the committee itself for its practical and sustained guidance and for producing such well reasoned and comprehensive support documentation.

It goes without saying that the difficulties to be surmounted in so large an urban centre – comprising public buildings, shopping streets, local authority housing, private housing developments, industrial estates, an expanding road system, as well as parks, playgrounds and the natural amenities which devolve from the surrounding landscape and the omnipresent Fergus river – would seem to be daunting: but not so, according to your record and to what was observed on the ground, so to speak.

To this adjudicator it is the core town with its mediaeval street pattern and interesting accretions of later eras that is most attractive – and how well this comparatively small area has been adapted to modern commercial life – that perennially impresses; other developments may seem less interesting by comparison because not unique to Ennis. For example, the rather dreary approach road from Clarecastle to St Flannan's College might be in any large town: but what is positive about such areas in Ennis is that they are well maintained, reasonably tidy and have a sense of belonging to something better.

On second adjudication day the extensive screening of building sites in Bank Place were obtrusive, but the illustrations provided showed that the new developments will be in keeping with the existing streetscape and are to be welcomed. (Incidentally, traffic here was quite disorganised due to a meitheal of An Post vans: surely the sorting office should have long ago been banished to a more appropriately accessible location?) There certainly are some fairly insalubrious corners such as Thompson's and Lysaght's lanes: but it must be said that these are minor in comparison with the very many other lanes and pedestrian entries which give a lively quaintness to the town centre. Excessive signage was mentioned by the first adjudicator, and this is still the case in places – for example the Munster Group banner reduces the design of the bright new building in the precinct off Abbey Street to the level of the shoddy, which it need not be, and the blatant O2 hoarding on a prominent gable near the O'Connell monument simply should not be there; but most of the business premises are very well presented and part of the charm of the shops in Ennis is their very multiplicity in the place where they ought to be: at the core of the town and not in some desolate mall. The second adjudicator was also impressed by the high standard of sculpture, of both past and present, and by the very attractively themed colour combinations of the floral decorations.

Every good wish is offered to a town which can satisfy so many social, environmental and visual requirements.

