

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portumna**

Ref: **611**

County: **Galway**

Mark: **236**

Category: **C**

Date: **12/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	35	36
The Built Environment	40	33	33
Landscaping	40	35	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	24	24
Litter Control	40	32	29
Tidiness	20	13	13
Residential Areas	30	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	30	30
General Impression	10	8	8
TOTAL MARK	300	236	233

Overall Developmental Approach:

Portumna once again achieved high marks for Landscaping, and Wild Life & Natural Amenities. Litter control was also good - well above average for the county. It was disappointing that some of the headings which refer to the urban centre (rather than to the surroundings) should have been less impressive. The town has real potential to do better overall. A strong effort, with ideas converted to action, in the less successful categories, would be greatly welcomed. On your map, please indicate all points of interest which should be visited; the Ordnance Survey map provided was published more than fifty years ago and does not show, for example, the many housing developments which have been erected since then. (The 1985 Forest Park map was interesting but of course does not cover the town.)

The Built Environment:

Many of the shops were quite smart, but even the best did not have the unique qualities, or the strict standard of maintenance, which would justify nomination for whatever awards are available. The attractive Cusack's, for example, needed the woodwork of its first-floor windows painted; the handsome Hayes' Pharmacy had PVC window frames which are not recommended for older buildings. The fascias of these and other shops were very well kept. Details are so important, and, when attended to, can increase marking considerably, as has occurred in other towns that have achieved a higher placing; one would like to see this happen here. Emerald Star is a well maintained commercial premises. The handsome Fire Station and the fine Library impressed among the public

buildings. The two churches, with their landmark steeples, add dignity and grace to the town.

Landscaping:

The superb formal gardens of Portumna Castle take pride of place in this category. The grassed spaces of the charming surroundings of the Abbey benefited from conspicuously good maintenance at the time of the visit. The shady Yew Walk, another a relic of earlier times, was well presented. There was attractive planting at the Roman Catholic church, though weeding of the beds was due. The grounds of the Shannon Oaks hotel looked really inviting. The remarkably well equipped children's playground was being enjoyed by its young patrons. The harbour and its environs, and the golf club, were also maintained at the high standard created elsewhere. Portumna caters very well indeed for outdoor sports and leisure activities.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The presence of the River Shannon, Lough Derg, and the Forest Park are immensely beneficial. The report of the Friends of the Portumna Forest Park made interesting reading. One of the forest paths was walked for about two miles, with the scent of the pines and the glimpses of water creating a mood of sheer peace and pleasure; a mental inventory of the variety of broadleaves and conifers was made in passing. Your marking under this heading is high, and you may be due additional marks when your documentation includes reports on activities related to nature conservation, especially if school children and young people are involved.

Litter Control:

The inconsistency mentioned by the Second Round adjudicator last year was manifest again - for example by the neat entrance to Shannon Park but the uncared-for site opposite; by well kept premisses on St Brigid's Road with derelict spaces adjacent. There was untidy sign age in the vicinity of Supervalue. Over-enthusiastic advertising and massproduced signs on otherwise good-looking shops did them no favours. These are only a few small details which may seem insignificant in themselves, but placed together they add up to quite a significant total.

Tidiness:

The majority of the traditional street houses in Portumna were maintained with pride these are the buildings which give character to the town - Dominic Street is an example. Nice new cottages were seen on St Brigid's Road - they may be sheltered housing; in the same road the College Green development was advertised - presumably an adaptation of the convent buildings; its completion will be looked forward to. The very smart holiday homes at Shannon Oaks were admired for their use of materials in a well defined space. An estate which was not quite completed at the date of adjudication was admired for its open green, its use of stone and the positioning of the houses with a woodland background: this was Forest Glade. An un-named estate on the Birr road where fine stone boundary walls were already in place looked promising: there was plenty of space available for the planting of trees; an unprepossessing entrance to another in the same locality will need careful thought as its entrance is situated between commercial sites.

Residential Areas:

Resurfacing at the junction of the Scariff and Loughrea roads was in progress on the date of adjudication and there was necessarily much traffic disruption. The result of this surfacing, and of the extensive footpaths adjacent, should be exemplary. Some of the other roads in the town are clearly due for renovation. The replacement of ugly poles and wires in the town centre would make an enormous difference, as has been the case elsewhere. Street furniture at the harbour was excellent. An impressive feature was the stone boundaries of many roadside properties. The car park at the Marina on the Birr road was well kept.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

General Impression:

As mentioned above, Portumna has real potential to join the award-winning towns at national level. It has superb surroundings favoured by the expertise of State organisations, it has an attractive traditional street plan, interesting public buildings, an infrastructure that caters well for touristic and leisure activities, and a pleasant air of commercial activity. Very few towns possess as much. What is needed is that little bit extra energy and vision in planning and development. It is hoped that this challenge will be successfully met.

Second Round Adjudication:

Weeds were a problem in isolated portions of kerbs on the Gort road on Second Adjudication Day. There are a number of new houses – both individual and in the form of housing estates along approach roads to the town. You should ensure that these are finished – in terms of materials and landscaping, to standards that reflect the overall integrity of the Portumna. Do ensure that building materials are removed once construction work is complete. The Catholic Church looked well with attractive hanging baskets. The attractive wrought iron entrance gates to the old church in the centre of the town unfortunately appeared rather rusty on the day. The Shannon Oaks Hotel and its marvellous grounds were as well presented as ever on Second Adjudication Day. A very derelict property diagonally opposite the church looked very unfortunate. Discourage advertising hoardings as these can give approach roads a rather cluttered appearance. A handpainted one on the Gort Road appeared rather flaky. Directional signs at this entrance to town appeared a little grubby. The double lamp standard at the centre of the town was also rather flaky and should be repainted before next year's competition.