

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardee**

Ref: **147**

County: **Louth**

Mark: **229**

Category: **D**

Date: **10/08/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	43	43
The Built Environment	40	32	31
Landscaping	40	31	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	23	23
Litter Control	40	25	28
Tidiness	20	14	14
Residential Areas	30	26	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	29	29
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	229	231

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to thank the Tidy Towns Committee for the very comprehensive documentation submitted with the Tidy Towns entry from. Both maps were very useful on adjudication day. You appear to have a strong committee of 20 people and you work closely with the Ferdia Group. The 2002 - 2006 Tidy Towns Action Plan is a very detailed and most useful document. When the results of this year's competition are available in September it will be time to advance your Plan to cover the period 2006-2010.

The Built Environment:

Ardee is a very interesting town with many heritage buildings. Great progress has been made with the Castle property to the extent that it is now available for public functions. On adjudication day the landscaping to the front of the building added some lovely strong colour that combined well with the warm colour of the stone behind it. The Fair Green area was beautifully presented and the red flowers in the small landscaped area were most effective as an eye catcher. The adjudicator was most disappointed with the presentation of the Dawson's bridge area. Here the litter was quite awful, graffiti on the bridge and the river bed also badly littered. However a number of buildings stand out including the Castle and the Church of Ireland church and grounds so well presented, and the Ferdia Arms for such a good use of colour. The red brick Bank of Ireland building is another building that looked so well on adjudication day. Have you considered trying to have some of the shop front signs in the town replaced with signs that use more traditional materials such as timber

and hand-painted lettering. This could be approached on a co-operative basis. Projecting advertising signs were noted in a number of back lanes in the town centre and this needs attention. The issue is how many of these signs are really essential from a commercial point of view? Does your Committee have any plans to encourage the use of the Irish language on some of your shop fronts? There is a special award in the Competition that includes the use of the Irish language. A few derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of your town / village. However there is a way in which perhaps you can make a feature of these buildings pending their removal or restoration. Try and get the owners to agree that they will blank out the window and door openings with heavy waterproof Marine plywood. This should then be painted matt black, and window bars and door panels painted in white. This approach as a temporary measure can look quite effective. The Ashe Walk area needs a of of improvement and the adjudicator notes that it is one of your priority areas. The litter in this area was quite terrible on adjudication day.

Landscaping:

The adjudicator walked the river walk and was quite disappointed with what he found. The first impression was that there was a large amount of litter here both in the small stream and the river and in the grass and hard landscaped areas. Graffiti was noted here also. The overall impression on adjudication day was that this is an area with great potential but it requires a much higher standard of overall maintenance. The adjudicator was aware that you wish to maintain this area with the needs of wildlife in mind and that is quite correct. Greater attention to detail at this walk will bring great results. However you must be congratulated for getting this amenity this far. The landscaping on the Dundalk / Dublin road was really excellent and the 'Failte' wording in flowers looked really well. Landscaping at the Fair Green also added much to that area, as did the presentation at the entrance to St. Brigid's Hospital. The hanging baskets and window boxes added much to the presentation of the main street. A few properties tended to overuse window boxes and hanging baskets, and this situation needs to be avoided. Just two hanging baskets in thr right location can be as effective as five or six.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The wildlife & sensory garden project is a welcome initiative as are your plans for Ardee Bog. The adjudicator was pleased to read that you are getting some good professional advice on the bog project. In many towns and villages this is an aspect of the Tidy Towns Competition where there can be significant potential for development. All towns and villages have the presence of wildlife to some degree. It is important that your Tidy Towns Committee would examine further the wildlife potential, and see what you can achieve in terms of making your area even more wildlife friendly. If you have not already done so, the starting point is to have a habitat Survey carried out of the wildlife in your area. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, canals, reed marsh, bogs
- Woodland habitats – forests, hedgerows, plantations, parks
- Grassland habitats – roadside verges, parks, wet meadows, dry grasslands

The Survey should produce a species list for each of the habitats relevant to your area. This need not be an expensive Survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable person in one of your Schools who might undertake this task for you. Basically the Survey would identify the animals, plants, birds, fish that inhabit your area and their associated habitats. It should be remembered that to carry out the Survey properly that it will probably take a year so that all habitats can be assessed at different time of the year. Using the results of the Wildlife Survey your next step should be to draft a straight forward Plan to preserve the identified habitats in your area, and investigate the possibility of new ones. For example perhaps there is an old Pond in your area that is disused, but with a little work could be an important area for wildfowl. It is most important to try and involve your local school children in this project, and in many Schools there is probably a teacher who may have an interest in this area who would be willing to get involved. As part of the actions to be undertaken in your Wildlife Plan you might like to consider the provision of some weather proof and vandal proof display panels, illustrating and explaining the wildlife in your area. This has been done very successfully in

many towns and villages in Ireland. Removing litter from the river and maintaining the river litter free will be an early requirement of a sustained wildlife programme.

Litter Control:

On adjudication day the litter control situation in Ardee was quite bad, and quantities of litter were found in many areas. These areas included - at the 50 KPH sign on the Dublin approach road, on the road to the Community School, the Golf Links road, the Fair Green, the Car Park at the bridge, the main street, Dawson's Bridge and area, the river bed, Ashe Walk, Market Square and the River Walk. It is very important that your Committee would develop a litter control plan for Ardee. The issue of litter control is not an issue just for the Local Authority. All citizens and especially your Tidy Towns Committee have a key role to play. Your plan should include such issues as surveying the litter bins that you have in your community and their adequacy, clean up days and the role of your local schools. It is most important that litter bins are placed in close proximity to the largest generates of litter. The regular emptying of a litter bins if of course essential.

Tidiness:

Graffiti was noted on the monument at Market Square and this should be removed without delay. Graffiti was also noted at the River Walk and at Dawson's Bridge area. The adjudicator is not in favour of the display of retail goods on the pavement as was noted here. Apart from looking rather untidy such displays can cause major difficulties for people in wheelchairs or the visually disabled. The issue of projecting shop signs has been referred to elsewhere in this report. Do make sure that all road signs are washed several times each year and that their supporting poles are painted.

Residential Areas:

The majority of private properties were well presented and a number were obviously freshly painted recently. Some attractive gardens were also noted, and the landscaping work by property owners contributes in an important way to the overall character of your village. It is important that your committee would discuss with the Local Authority the issue of an acceptable level of landscaping for all future new housing estate developments in your town. This can probably best be handled through Planning Permission Conditions. An excellently presented small estate was noted on the Kells Road at the 100 KPH sign. The attention to detail here was exceptionally high. The front portion of Ferdia Park was really impressive in terms of landscaping and overall presentation. However elsewhere in the estate the same standard was not achieved. On Lamb's Terrace a row of terraced cottages was noted with a great colour scheme and most of the properties freshly painted.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

In general most approach roads were well presented, though in some cases the presentation of verges and banks could have been taken a little further out - for example on the road to the Community School. On the Kells Road the work on verges and banks could be taken out beyond St. Brigid's Hospital. However the Derry/Monaghan approach road was quite poorly presented and banks had been quite roughly cut.

General Impression:

The adjudicator recommends that the Committee might consider the following priorities for 2006 -

- Litter control
- The River Walk
- A more coordinated approach to all approach roads
- Development of the wildlife potential of the area.

Other aspects of the Competition must of course receive appropriate attention at the same time.

Second Round Adjudication:

Ardee enjoys a good standard of presentation in most respects and had a good overall appearance on adjudication day.

Litter control was good within the town centre with the important exception of the river bed which featured a chair, a bike, beer and soft drinks cans; a duck was spotted pushing a way through the cans! litter was also noted on the entrance from the Derry road and on the Dunleer road.

Landscaping was admired for its variety, colour, profusion and maturity throughout.

Seating on the river walk was in need of refurbishment and a lot of broken glass was noted.

Hopefully new residents will become involved in the Tidy Towns initiative and help Ardee progress further in the competition.