

# Tidy Towns Competition 2005

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Drogheda**

Ref: **424**

County: **Louth**

Mark: **217**

Category: **F**

Date: **13/07/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	39	39
The Built Environment	40	33	33
Landscaping	40	33	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	19
Litter Control	40	20	21
Tidiness	20	12	12
Residential Areas	30	24	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	30	31
General Impression	10	7	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>219</b>

### Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to thank Drogheda Borough Council for the very comprehensive documentation submitted with the entry form. The map was really excellent in terms of size, scale and content. The Tidy Towns Action Plan for 2004 - 2006 was a most interesting document, but would be improved if individual objectives were allocated to an individual year. The handling of a town the size of Drogheda from a Tidy Towns point of view is difficult and the adjudicator is aware that you have a very large area to handle.

### The Built Environment:

Drogheda is fortunate in that so many heritage buildings survive. St. Lawrence's Gate is a really imposing structure that has so much history. However the helpful information plaque had some graffiti and needed attention. The Butter Gate Tower dominates the view upwards from the River Boyne. The presentation here could be improved significantly if the grass on the slope immediately below the stone work was cut on a regular basis. The Borough Council Offices and the red brick building used by the Planning department nearby were very well presented. However the Drogheda Community Services red brick building nearby is compromised in visual terms by the inappropriate signs on the front facade of the building. The development of the Drogheda Civic Arts Centre was under way at the time of adjudication and it is good to see an existing building being converted to a suitable new use. Some attractive new properties were noted near the St. Lawrence Gate - the Credit Union is housed here. Presumably these properties are new build and they fit in quite well

with the surrounding area. The St. Lawrence Town Centre development appears to be a major development and the adjudicator looks forward to seeing the completed development.

Other buildings caught the eye such as the First Active building with the beautiful cut stone arches, and the red brick above.

Have you considered examining the possible replacement of some of the shop front signs in the town 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 quite a number of premises in Drogheda town centre and this needs attention. The issue is how many of these signs are really essential from a commercial point of view?

Have you considered trying 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.

Some derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of Drogheda. 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.

## **Landscaping:**

Drogheda is fortunate in that the town has a lot of green open space. In general terms the adjudicator felt that the appearance of many of these areas could be improved. Unfortunately these areas need to have grass cut on a very regular basis if that lush green and well maintained look is to be presented on a continuous basis, and that demands a lot of human resources commitment. The roundabout near the Home Base property looked really well and the landscaping here really caught the eye. The same applied to the landscaping at the nearby IDA property where the stone work here stood out.

## **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

The 'Boyne River Watch' project is an excellent way of getting more people involved in environmental matters that impact on Drogheda. The adjudicator was pleased to see that the 2004 Mallard Duck programme was so successful. 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 do 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.

### **Litter Control:**

The replacement of a number of litter bins was noted. However the litter control situation on adjudication was quite poor both in the centre of Drogheda and on many of the approach roads. It is very important that the Borough Council would develop a litter control plan / policy for Drogheda if there is not already one in place. On the approach roads litter was noted on Duleek Street, the Millmount area, at the Donore Road / Bus Station junction, Rathmullen road and a lot on Wellington Quay. The adjudicator understands that Drogheda has two litter wardens. They have a major area to cover between them and the issue is probably that an additional warden or wardens is required to assist them in their vital work.

### **Tidiness:**

The National Spring Clean Week is an excellent concept used in many other towns also. Fr. Connolly Quay was quite untidy on adjudication day. The narrow grass area on the river side of the car park was quite untidy with worn grass and bare earth patches. The railings here along by the river need to be painted, and the original red would look great here. At the nearby pedestrian bridge the railings needed painting also. The view under the bridge was rather unsightly and this area needs cleaning. The cleaning of the river bed in various areas would be a difficult but very worthwhile project. Various buildings in the town centre area need improvement of the shop frontage. Have you considered running a "Best Shopfront" competition? The adjudicator has been involved in these competitions in the past and they can produce good results. The improvement of such shop frontages would mark a major contribution to the overall visual appearance of the town centre areas.

### **Residential Areas:**

The adjudicator visited quite a number of estates shown on the map and the overall impression was that each estate was working alone to present their estate in the best way possible. Have you considered running a "Best Kept Estate" Competition that would encourage some healthy rivalry between estates? The entrance areas to some estates were well landscaped but this standard was not carried on throughout the estate. The addition of some trees to large open areas in some estates would also be a great improvement.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

There did not appear to be any co-ordinated on going approach to the presentation of approach roads. Indeed no approach roads visited by the adjudicator had an instant visual impact effect brought about by the quality of presentation of banks, verges or landscaping.

For example on the Dublin approach road many of the small grass areas were damaged at the edges and rather wore, and did not appear to be cut frequently. St. Patrick's Lane looked very untidy on adjudication day, though some building work was in progress to the rear.

### **General Impression:**

The adjudicator is of the view that a much more co-ordinated approach is required to the presentation of Drogheda from a Tidy Towns point of view. The area to be presented is extremely large and perhaps a five year co-ordinated programme is required to avoid placing too heavy a strain on the Borough Council human and financial resources. In the view of the adjudicator litter control and the appearance of approach roads should feature strongly in your actions for 2006.

Well done to the Borough Council for the work done to date.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**