

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castleblaney**

Ref: **94**

County: **Monaghan**

Mark: **178**

Category: **D**

Date: **03/07/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	30	29
The Built Environment	40	25	25
Landscaping	40	25	24
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	15	15
Litter Control	40	19	20
Tidiness	20	13	13
Residential Areas	30	21	20
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	24	23
General Impression	10	6	6
TOTAL MARK	300	178	175

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to thank you for the excellent town map and supporting Strategic Plan 2005. These documents were used fully on adjudication day. Thank you for taking so much trouble to put the documentation together.

The adjudicator notes that a Tidy Towns Work Programme or Plan was not submitted with the entry documentation. All towns and villages are required to have a simple straight forward 3 –5 Year Tidy Towns Plan for their area. This Plan is prepared by your Committee in consultation with the appropriate local organisations. It should be no more than seven to ten pages long. The purpose of the Plan is to guide the work of your Tidy Towns Committee and others over the short to medium term. Your Plan should detail year by year the work that you intend to do each year. It is recommended that you do not have too many objectives each year – perhaps 4/5 key projects. You will find that this Plan will be of great help to you in planning for your future of the town and area.

The Built Environment:

The trees in the Main Street are quite attractive and help to soften a little the impact of so many parked cars.

The Market House is the most prominent building in Castleblaney and it is encouraging to read that there are plans to restore this building. Restoration in itself is of course important but finding the

right viable future uses for the building can sometimes be a problem that is also difficult to resolve. Choose the main colour for this building carefully, the present colour is not especially suitable. The reopening of the Alms Houses marked a great day for the town. The restoration externally has been beautifully carried out. The grounds in front will look very attractive if grassed and landscaped properly. The adjudicator nominated this building for the National Tidy Towns Architecture Award, and it will be considered from among the many other nominations from around the country. The Methodist Church is another building that caught the eye and the grounds were so beautifully landscaped. The concept of the Best Shop Front Award is excellent, and this works very well in other parts of the country.

Have you considered replacing 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 on a number of premises 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?

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.

A few derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of Castleblaney. 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:

You have carried out a lot of both new and replacement landscaping this year, that also involved some of the housing estates. The adjudicator examined these locations and the work that you carried out was certainly an improvement on what it replaced. Some of the photographs were most useful in this regard. Young trees were noted on the Monaghan approach not far from the Campus premises and when mature will be a finer feature as you approach the town from the Monaghan side. You have used many flower tubs, window boxes, and hanging baskets all to good effect. However on the Monaghan approach road the main colour in the timber framed beds was blue. A brighter choice of plant colour here might have been more effective.

All grass in landscaped areas needs to be cut on a regular basis if you are to achieve a lush green well-kept visual effect. Do remember also that all cut grass must be removed immediately after cutting, as dead grass detracts from the overall effect of landscaped areas. It is important also that the grass is cut away from the tops of kerbing, and this may need to be done by hand.

In many villages several small landscaped areas may be more effective visually than one large area that may be difficult to maintain. If you are considering developing new landscaped areas do keep the issue of on-going maintenance in mind.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

You have consulted with some experts in regard to wildlife development and that is the correct action to take. 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.

The potential of the Muckno Lake project is very big and hopefully you will be able to start work on that objective in time for the 2006 Tidy Towns competition.

Litter Control:

You are involving school children in your anti-litter programmes and that is important as are your family spring clean days. On an initial examination of Castleblarney the adjudicator got the early impression that litter control was good. However when the town was looked at in detail together with the surrounding areas a different picture emerged. Litter control on adjudication day was not good. Quantities of litter was noted in the Main Street, at Laurel Hill and Drumillard estates. The situation in the Main Street was quite bad.

It is very important that your Committee would develop a litter control plan for your town / village. 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:

Weed growth at the base of walls, and at at roadside kerbing in some estates was noted as a problem in a number of areas. Many large untidy looking advertising signs were noted on approach roads. You have been working on this issue in regard to the Monaghan road and on adjudication day the problem there still seemed to persist. The adjudicator noted that you are targeting residents

associations / groups that may need some initial help to get projects off the ground and that sort of pro-active support is welcomed. The appearance of the Blaney Bowl could be improved if the concrete areas on the front elevation were painted perhaps in cream. The design of this modern building is imaginative. At the garage area opposite Campus on the Monaghan road the doors here are in need of painting. A very large untidy area was noted down a small road at the tile company sign off the main road to Keady. This area needs to be screened from view pending development. Many poles for signs need to be painted using a colour coordinated scheme through the town.

Residential Areas:

New housing development was noted and this is to be welcomed, however the provision of appropriate landscaping by the various developers is of crucial importance. If you have not already done so your Committee might talk to your Local Authority to discuss the issue of landscaping by builders. Perhaps this can best be delivered through the Planning Conditions process. Many of the housing estates were attractively presented and good work was carried out by a number of the residents

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. If you have not already done so, your Tidy Towns Committee might consider asking the housing estates to organise their own 'Best Kept Estate' Competition. In this way they will make a meaningful contribution to your overall

The clean up at the entrance to The Crescent estate is a welcome improvement, while good landscaping was noted at The Willows. Again at Laurel Hill the fine tree and neatly cut grass on the right at the entrance area looked very well on adjudication day. At Drumillard estate the two timber tubs just inside the entrance looked quite effective as they raised the planting a little above to grass surface.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Work had been done to some level on all approach roads, though on the Carrickmacross road there was an inconsistency in presentation - some verges were beautifully cut and others not. The Monaghan approach was perhaps the best presentation and the existing trees have combined well with the more recent planting. Can you make a rule for yourselves and your helpers that all cut grass must be taken away on the day that it is cut. Do remember also that verges will need to be cut on quite a regular basis if you are to achieve a lush green well kept appearance of banks and roadside verges. A tractor and mower will not give the neat well kept appearance that can be achieved by a motor mower.

It is important to wash the town name signs from time to time and make sure that any poles used for such signs are painted. Likewise try and get the Local Authority to repaint the poles used for Speed Limit Signs.

General Impression:

For 2005 you have adopted a very focused approach to the presentation of Castleblarney and hopefully this approach will be continued in your Tidy Towns Action Plan for the period 2006 - 2008.

Second Round Adjudication: