

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clones**

Ref: **349**

County: **Monaghan**

Mark: **185**

Category: **C**

Date: **02/07/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	39	38
The Built Environment	40	26	25
Landscaping	40	26	25
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	14	14
Litter Control	40	21	19
Tidiness	20	12	11
Residential Areas	30	17	17
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	23	24
General Impression	10	7	6
TOTAL MARK	300	185	179

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to thank the Tidy Towns Committee for the excellent town map and very detailed supporting documentation that accompanied the entry form. Congratulations on your taking over of responsibility for Tidy Towns in Clones. You are working with all the agencies that should be able to help you with your work and that is a great start. Thank you also for the outline plan 2004-2006, and the adjudicator notes that more detailed plans will be available next year. Your 3 - 5 Year Plan should detail year by year what your objectives are. Do not be tempted to undertake an unrealistic amount of work in any one year - do be realistic. The involvement of the Clones Chamber of Commerce is in the view of the adjudicator an essential ingredient for success as they are in contact with many of the key interests in the town. It goes without saying that the Local Authority involvement is of key importance.

The Built Environment:

Clones is quite an imposing town dominated by the Diamond from which roads and streets radiate. In the town there was a great feeling of community spirit and co-operation. The news of the funding of £70,000 for street-scape works is excellent news. Your key project is The Boardroom and this small building is really most attractive. When the landscaping works phase has started and reached completion this property will be a central feature of the town. The Diamond on adjudication day was looking very crisp and clean and the overall presentation here was superb. The regulation of traffic and parking here is working very well. The cobble lock paving, excellently presented grass areas,

trees and shrubs and tarmacadam defined traffic routes all come together in an excellent presentation.

Fermanagh street is a street of character so tightly defined by the tall three storey properties. The cobbled parking area for just a few cars in various locations looked quite effective. As mentioned elsewhere the old cinema property is the main problem in this street.

The Ulster Canal Store building and landscaped grounds was looking very well on adjudication day. Is there any possibility of getting water back in to what presumably was the canal at the side of the building? The nearby playground has a really great setting in the mature trees and good presentation was noted here also. At the GAA property the painting of the long roadside wall here might be considered - it was a little dull.

A few derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of Clones. 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 old cinema on Fermanagh Street remains the main problem in regard to derelict buildings.

The Largey College and grounds caught the eye as did the Credit Union building in The Diamond. This is a relatively modern building that fits into the existing architecture of The Diamond quite well. The large clock here is an attractive feature. The round tower is an interesting reminder of the historic past that Clones has inherited but still there is no signpost off Cara Street, and an information panel at the tower itself is lacking. Indeed a copy of the information panel at the High Cross could be provided at the tower. The two gates on the approach to the tower need to be painted.

The new information fingerposts in Clones were examined. In the view of the adjudicator they are a little large and lack the sophistication that Clones deserves. Have you considered providing smaller cast iron / metal signs using the black background and white or gold lettering format?

Landscaping:

The complication in regard to the development of the Barry McGuigan Park is noted and hopefully there is room for both the planned Technology Park and the amenity park area. The grass by the road alongside the park needed cutting, but the planting here looked quite attractive. Good landscaping was noted in many parts of Clones and perhaps The Diamond was the most eye catching area of all. However good landscaping was also noted in the area of McClave's, at the Catholic Church and on most approach roads. The planting of the 1,000 flowering bulbs and plants was certainly effective.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The provision of the bird boxes for the Park and the School wildlife garden are most positive projects in terms of wildlife in the area. 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:

Though the adjudication was carried out quite early in the morning the town centre was remarkably free of litter on adjudication day. There was a very crisp and clean presentation to both the centre and the inner approaches to The Diamond. The regular litter cleans ups are obviously having a very positive effect. However bad litter was noted on the verges of some approach roads including the N.54 Cavan road, and in the Church Hill area.

Tidiness:

Congratulations to Clones of their success in the Pride of Place Competition - runner up in 2004. A number of small casual open spaces were noted in your village. In some cases these are potential sites for housing purposes. However pending development these open spaces can become quite untidy with long grass and weed growth. If possible these sites should be screened pending development. The rear views to some of the properties that front on to the Diamond were in some cases quite untidy. It is appreciated that the resolution of this problem is not a short term one. The very large open site in front of Clones Tractors was a little untidy and perhaps this area can be screened from the roadway.

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. 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 tidy Towns objectives.

It is important that your committee would discuss with the Local Authority to issue of an acceptable level of landscaping for all new housing estate developments that may take place in your town in the future. This can probably best be handled through Planning Permission Conditions.

The support that you have been able to give to various housing estates for landscaping has been

effective. Work at O'Neill Park and Beechgrove looked well on adjudication day. The Largy area of older properties was also well presented and quite a number of properties here had also been painted recently. On the Newbliss road a very attractive curve of two storey terraced properties caught the eye with their fine iron railings.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

On the Cavan approach road the Clones sign was overgrown and could not be read. This approach road has good potential and the attractive low stone wall on the left hand side adds character to this approach. At the twinning sign the banks and verge had been roughly cut, and the grass had been cut too short. On the Monaghan approach road little recent work appeared to have been done. Likewise on the Scothouse road little work had been done recently, and on the Newbliss approach road some rough cutting had been done.

The overall presentation of all approach roads is of critical importance. It is this that gives the first impression of your town or village. Attractive well presented approach roads give a great impression of a community that cares about how others see them.

You verges have been cut but the cut grass has not been taken away. The result is an untidy appearance with new grass growth trying to grow through the dead cut grass. 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.

General Impression:

Clones is a very impressive town and the Tidy Towns effort that has taken place over the past year was reflected in the overall improved presentation on adjudication day.

Second Round Adjudication: