

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Newbliss**

Ref: **68**

County: **Monaghan**

Mark: **166**

Category: **B**

Date: **01/07/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	34	33
The Built Environment	40	24	24
Landscaping	40	21	20
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	12	12
Litter Control	40	21	22
Tidiness	20	10	11
Residential Areas	30	18	17
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	21	22
General Impression	10	5	5
TOTAL MARK	300	166	166

Overall Developmental Approach:

The adjudicator would like to thank you for the village map and the back up documentation. You had many targets to achieve for 2005 - a total of 18. Well done on your successes to date. In your documentation it is important also to state clearly what you have actually achieved during the year.

The really successful Tidy Towns Committees are those that succeed in harnessing the goodwill, skills and experience of a number of different groups and Agencies that have something to contribute to the implementation of the 3-5 Year Tidy Towns Plan. These groups and Agencies include the following –

- GAA
- Local Development Association
- FAS
- County Council
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local SuperValu outlet
- LEADER Company
- The CLAR Programme (if you are in a CLAR designated area)
- Local School or schools
- Urban & Village Renewal Grant Scheme

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.

The Built Environment:

The seats and picnic tables are a good addition to the village but do remember that ongoing maintenance is essential. The Main Street is attractively laid out in that small spaces have been allocated for the parking of just a few cars in each. This is very effective in breaking up the lines of cars that are so often seen in towns and villages in Ireland. Some properties need improvements such as painting and do not forget that high gable walls need to be painted also. 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 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? Some large signs in bright colours were noted also that do not fit comfortably with the character of the village.

The Church of Ireland Church is a beautiful property well presented and the nearby Gate Lodge also caught the eye. However the iron gates here need to be painted. Properties that caught the eye included the old Market House, a fine building but does it have a new productive use? The Emo stone property is a fine development but the green shutter covers are a little unfortunate as this colour does not blend with the stone.

Landscaping:

The many hanging baskets, flower tubs and window boxes added so much colour to Newbliss. The hanging baskets on the lighting standards in pairs were also very effective in giving some higher level colour to the street. The small landscaped area at the Monaghan road junction fits well into the available space. Some new planting was noted at the entrance to the Clones Road housing estate together with the table. However this area seems to be receiving little attention and it looked a little overgrown.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The plans for the wild flower meadow sound very interesting and hopefully you will achieve this for 2006. 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 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 grass lands

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:

Litter control was not especially good on adjudication day. Litter was noted at the Clones Road estate, on the Cootehill road, and on Main Street especially in the area of the Market House. It is very important that your Committee would develop a litter control plan for your 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:

An untidy open space was noted near the Monaghan / Ballybay road junction. The open space at the entrance to the Clones Road estate has been mentioned above - an area poorly presented. Quite a large untidy open space was noted near Darragh Boats, and screening or general tidying here would be an improvement. Another untidy area was the large site opposite the Castle Avenue road junction. Hopefully there are plans for the sympathetic development of this prominent site.

Residential Areas:

The Main Street has a number of both two and three storey private houses and generally these were well presented. Some properties need to be painted. On the Monaghan road good presentation of a mix of private properties was noted. Much new development is under way in Newbliss and that brings its own pressures on the environment of the village.

The new entrance area to Cluan Darach looks quite well but the railings for every house in the estate gives rather an enclosed feel. A co-operative scheme to paint all railings on the estate would be very worthwhile but this would have to be done on a strictly planned basis. The estate on the Clones Road was quite untidy especially in the area of the new Playground. An attractive terrace of houses was noted running from the Clones road up to the Main Street and around the corner. Some boundary walls here need to be painted.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Some good work had been done on the Cootehill approach road and this approach seems to have major potential in presentation terms. Little work appears to have been done on other approach roads.

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.

Where there is a wide verge on one or both sides of an approach road best practice indicates that only about 1 metres of the grass verge in from the road should be cut on a regular basis. This applies to verges that are about two metres or more in width.

The rest of the verge area should be kept wild to allow for the needs of wildlife. However you will still need to pay attention to this area. In general you should not let this area get too overgrown and untidy. Watch out also for litter that may get trapped by the long grass on this part of your verge.

Your 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.

A frequent problem with approach roads is that there is no road kerb to divide the road surface from the grass verge. A frequent result of this is that verges get badly damaged by parked vehicles. This is a problem especially where the grass verges are wide. Do talk to your Local Authority Engineer about this difficulty. If kerbing looks out of place in your rural setting then perhaps large stones can be used by the Local Authority to define the edge of the roadway.

Do make sure that any old stone walls on approach roads are not in need of repair. Gaps due to collapse can look quite untidy. Fences should be kept in good repair and do cut long grass that may tend to grow up through the timber fencing. Hedging on approach roads needs trimming from time to time but do avoid bird nesting time of the year..

It is important to wash the town / village 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.

Speed limit signs also need to be washed on a regular basis. The poles that support these signs should also be painted by the Local Authority

Field gates can become a feature of your approach roads. It may be possible for you to get agreement from the relevant landowners that all damaged gates will be replaced, and that all gates will be painted to a common colour scheme.

General Impression:

Newbliss has good potential in the Tidy owns Competition but progress can only be made on a strictly planned basis. Good luck with your future plans.

Second Round Adjudication: