

Tidy Towns Competition 2005

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Sligo**

Ref: **212**

County: **Sligo**

Mark: **199**

Category: **F**

Date: **23/06/2005**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2005	Mark Awarded 2004
Overall Developmental Approach	50	36	37
The Built Environment	40	33	33
Landscaping	40	34	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	30	19	19
Litter Control	40	18	20
Tidiness	20	10	11
Residential Areas	30	22	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	40	22	22
General Impression	10	5	7
TOTAL MARK	300	199	205

Overall Developmental Approach:

Sligo is a large town undergoing major re-development at the present time. The adjudicator is curious as to why the responsibility for entry in the Tidy Towns Competition rests on a very small committee of just 6 people, rather than with the Sligo Borough Council. The very good work being done by the Tidy Towns Committee is acknowledged, but it is unreasonable to expect them to be able to handle the whole town even with the support that they have from the Borough Council in their tasks.

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
- Local School or schools
- Urban & Village Renewal Grant Scheme

The adjudicator is concerned to note 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.

It seems to your adjudicator that much more attention has been given to the presentation of the approaches to the town, rather than to the core of the town. The adjudicator spent a lot of time on foot in the town centre and there is little feeling that there is a master urban plan in place to improve the centre of Sligo. The presentation in general terms was quite disappointing.

The Built Environment:

The application form mentions that an environmental enhancement scheme is in place but no details were provided for the adjudicator. The Wine Street Car Park is one of the main car parks in the town and it is recommended that this large area is broken up by the use of semi mature trees and hard landscaping. Some beautiful buildings were noted including the Henry Lyons property with its very attractive lettering, the Sligo Borough Council Offices with the excellent landscaping, The Sligo Art Gallery is an attractive brick and plaster building. It is good to see that W.B. Yeats is remembered by the statue in the town. Here the presentation would be much improved by some simple planting at the base of the monument. It is encouraging to see the old Church converted to a new use as a home for the Library and Museum. The McCullaghs pub with the red and black colour scheme stands out. The adjudicator was quite taken with the Irish Life building with the many arches. This is a modern building with reflections of the past that fits well into the town centre. Perhaps the most interesting facade is that of Menswear, perhaps the old AIB building. The frontage here with the large quadrant window is spectacular and Menswear are to be congratulated on their very low key approach to advertising themselves here. The Institute of Technology building and grounds and the nearby Regional Hospital stand out as excellently presented and landscaped buildings. The presentation of Ash Lane with the low wall, railings and trees is of a very high standard.

The other aspect of the built environment is the very poor condition of many other buildings. For example in Castle Street the level of building maintenance on some buildings seems to be very low. There are many examples of poor shop front design and poor signage on these shop fronts. This does little credit to an important county town.

A number of derelict buildings were noted that detract from the overall appearance of the built environment of your town . 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:

Some excellent work has been done on landscaping especially outside of the core of the town. Approach road landscaping is so important in that it provides a welcome for the visitor to the town. In the case of Sligo the presentation on the outskirts of the town does not match that of the core.

The President John Kennedy Promenade shows exactly what is possible in Sligo in terms of presentation of an international standard. Can the same be repeated across the river at Kempton Promenade when construction work is completed there? At the President John Kennedy Promenade there is a clear distinction between vehicular areas and pedestrian areas that is so desirable. The presentation of Ashe Lane has been referred to elsewhere in this report.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

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.
- 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 river in your town has excellent potential to become a really important natural amenity. You should start by organising a major river clean up. Landscaping of the river bank areas should then follow, with the provision perhaps of appropriate seating.

Litter Control:

The lack of litter control in the core area of the town was quite unacceptable. On all main streets and many lanes large quantities of litter were noted blowing in the wind - what an image for visitors to the town to take away. Much of this litter appeared to be 'old' litter that was not dropped in the past day or so. Indeed the impression given was that the core areas of the town had not been swept for some days. This litter was not associated with building works now under way in the centre of the town. Some of the worst areas in terms of litter were the Courtyard off O'Connell Street, John Street. Quay Street (near river), Connaught Road, Abbey Street, and O'Connell Street. The narrow lane joining John Street to the Wine Street car park was really terrible.

Tidiness:

The monthly clean up programme is good idea and hopefully they are well supported. In a number of places weed growth in cobble-lock pavements is a problem. The bottom of Quay Street was very untidy and littered, and this appears to be an area that attracts many visitors. The weed growth at

the railing along the river edge opposite Sligo Weekender is really obvious to anyone in that area and needs to be removed without delay. At Sligo Abbey the railings need to be painted.

Residential Areas:

Residential areas were generally well presented and some lovely terraces of older properties were noted. These included the terrace of period houses at the bottom of Wine Street, the Georgian houses in Quay Street, the terrace of three storey houses in John Street, and the bay window fronted terrace in Stephen Street. The old iron railings that are attractively painted are an important feature here, together with the small landscaped gardens and excellently presented houses.

The standard of presentation of many housing estates was quite good. Well done to all the residents involved.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Roads and streets outside of the core area of the town looked well and in many cases the landscaping was really good. The new inner relief road was under development at the time of this adjudication, and marks have not been deducted in respect of problems associated with these works. Some small narrow back lanes were poorly presented with bad grass and weed growth. An example is beside Zulu's in Wine Street.

General Impression:

This adjudication has been an honest one and hopefully a helpful one. The adjudicator feels that a real focus is required in the core area of the town and a three year plan should be put in place to improve this important commercial area. Sligo has the potential to do well in the competition but the existing small committee of just 6 people must have much more support apart from that provided by the Sligo Borough District Council.

Second Round Adjudication: