

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Buncrana** Ref: **696**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **259**
Category: **D** Date(s): **17/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	39
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	35
Litter Control	50	25
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	28
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	259

Overall Development Approach:

It is four or five years since this adjudicator's last visit to Buncrana and there has been an immense improvement. This is reflected in the reports of subsequent adjudicators and in the attitudes expressed in your excellent documentation. (There is no necessity to enclose copies of correspondence with other organisations; and if you could reduce your excellent series of maps to one smaller sheet - as is done by committees in much larger towns - it would be a great help to the judges: it is difficult to manipulate three large sheets when walking through the town, especially in bad weather!) Progress may seem slow enough to those who work on the projects, but to the outside observer it is impressive - and especially the involvement of school children. Are you certain that the population is under 5,000? - The question is asked merely because of the very large number of new homes seen. All the work is particularly commendable at a time when there are media reports of extensive factory closures in the neighbourhood.

The Built Environment:

Though Tullygarvan Mill was closed on the date of the visit it was easy to appreciate the quality of the restoration and environmental works - the fine limestone with traditional brick facing, the slate roofing, the cobbled forecourt - and what could be seen through the glass doors was most promising. The other innovation new to this adjudicator was the development of the street and square opposite Lidl with new shops (not marked on your map) where the tidiness of the business premises was in marked contrast to many such in Main Street. Do use your influence to prevent mass-produced signage and advertising from disfiguring this bright new precinct. Another neat row of shops was admired alongside the cinema. The churches and schools were, as usual, presented to a high standard. Some other well-kept public buildings not often referred to in reports are the Civic Offices, the Garda Station, the Bank of Ireland, the Leisure Centre and the Youthreach Centre. It was a pity to see the abandoned hotel near the pier and the ugly concrete structure adjacent - and of course the prominent and handsome old mill in the upper part of the town remains in a ruinous condition. No

great beauty-spot, through the grounds were always well presented, it is extremely sad to see the closure of Fruit-of-the-Loom.

Landscaping:

The people of Buncrana are fortunate in having so many well maintained grassed spaces and public lawns - these and the splendidly planted roundabouts are what strike the visitor immediately; they were photographed and entered for a possible award. The subtlety in the choice of plants, and in the colour combinations of planting in places like Victoria Bridge right down to small beds and troughs, shows a real understanding of horticulture and its application to municipal spaces. Well maintained hanging baskets were favourably noted. The surroundings of churches and public buildings were also well presented. The childrens' playground is well equipped and splendidly sited.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Buncrana has done very well under this heading. The suport activities described in your documentation clearly create the right climate of local interest. To the visitor, what is seen is the test. A great deal of tree-planting, whether this year or earlier, was noticed. The development and maintenance of the Swan Park natural amenity was the chief object of admiration. In spite of poor weather at the time of the visit the whole length of the riverside park was walked, noting the interpretative tiles on the paths, the handsome memorial plaques, the butterfly garden with its extremely interesting interpretative boards, and above all the relationship of man to nature as evinced by the cultivation of the formal garden, the seating, the historic road bridge vis-a-vis the wilder aspects of river, wier and mature timber. All this was photographed and also entered for a possible award. It was noted from your entry form that bird and bat boxes are provided.

Litter Control:

While it is common knowledge that this can vary from day to day, the tendency in almost all centres in the county this year has been to improved litter control. This was no different in Buncrana. The litter awareness week held here, and in some other places, must have contributed. Congratulations to the voluntary helpers, especially young people, who take part.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an average mark in the first year of this new category - a category that will assume greater importance as time goes on. It is essential that a site for recycling be provided, with supervision, by the local Authority, and it is good to read that this is happening.

Tidiness:

Some derelection was seen, and the mass of commercial signage in the main street does not help the visual amenity. It was a pity to see quaint mews houses vacant on Orans Road and two pleasant Edwardian houses nearby now a closed business. Inconsistency of maintenances of properties in some areas is a contributor - for example, while there are well kept properties in the short stretch between Supervalu and Main Street, there are also dishevelled boundaries, stained walls, ostentatious advertising on gables, unkempt frontages: nothing exceptionally unpleasant, yet the overall impression is very negative. While all this is counteracted by the first class landscaping and many well kept buildings mentioned above, unfortunately the eye catches such areas of less repute all too readily.

Residential Areas:

The distinguished Victorian and Edwardian suburbs are what give Buncrana its special flavour - this is unusual, because in most towns it is the older core streets which do the same. These suburban homes, mainly in terraces and quiet avenues between Main Street and the sea, are maintained with a real sense of pride. Some of the very new estates also impressed, especially where tree-planting and simple landscaping were seen. The older estates mentioned by last year's adjudicator were looked after to a resonably good standard. It is good that there are competitions between the estates.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Good street furniture, including lamps, was seen in Main Street and Market Square, enhanced by flag displays. (Some of the trees seemed to need attention.) Not all streets seemed to have name plates. As noted by last year's adjudicator, most streets were very well surfaced with good paving, except for the Carndonagh road and some side streets. The roundabouts have been favourably noted under the Landscaping heading.

General Impression:

Buncrana does particularly well on landscaping and natural amenities, and to a considerable extent on maintenance of the building stock. Some of the other categories are somewhat less successful, and it is to

these that attention should now be given. It has been a very rewarding exercise to see the really significant way in which the town is improving with your guidance and the co-operation of the official bodies. Best wishes for continuing the good work.