

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Gort a'Choirce** Ref: **860**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **219**
Category: **A** Date(s): **14/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	33
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	22
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	12
Litter Control	50	35
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	219

Overall Development Approach:

Do not be disappointed with your marking in this, your first, appearance in the Tidy Towns competition; your total mark is above average for the county - this is because you start with what is already a well-kept village (other centres which have been in the competition for some years may be quite envious! It will be in the 2007 competition that you will find your proper level when it is seen what improvements have been made since this year, and, all going well, you should experience a significant rise in marks. It would be advisable to create a Development Plan to articulate objectives under the various headings (Buildings, Landscaping, Roads, etc) covering, say, the next three years; successful committees have found that there is nothing like the setting-out of goals for each separate project, allocating starting and finishing dates for them, to concentrate the mind and cause much enthusiasm among the voluntary helpers. The involvement of children and young people is essential. You are very well placed with your contacts in the local Authority, the Parish Council and the Teachers' Centre to obtain effective advice. A useful set of ideas will undoubtedly come to you as a result of the circular you sent out to residents inviting suggestions. In general, in the brief comments below, only the better and the not-so good buildings or locations are commented upon; those that are not mentioned are felt to be very adequate.

The Built Environment:

To the passer-by who does not have the time to pause and look closely at individual buildings it is Ostan Loch Altan that catches the eye. (Is this on the site of the famous McFadden's Hotel which this adjudicator remembers seeing on childhood visits?) It was very smartly presented on the date of adjudication, perhaps even a little severe in its neatness and might benefit from some planting such as rambler roses or clematis. Teach Maggie Dan could also do with some softening by planting. Maxol/Mace is also well presented; the thought does occur that a mass-produced design like this might be better situated outside the traditional village core area - but that notion does not take away from the fact that it is a very well kept premises. Fine

stonework at Teach Billie was admired; Garaiste Mhic Iomhair looked well, as did Ostan an Bear Mor with its amusing sign. Ionad Pobail le Cheile will shortly be in need of freshening up with paint. The Church is maintained with proper dignity and the pleasant School is enhanced by bright and imaginative mural painting.

Landscaping:

There is no major landscaping project in the village, though the housing estates have good grassed areas or flowerbeds, and the placing of floral tubs in a number of places give a real sense of care and colour. The graveyard is beautifully kept (it was interesting to see so many headstones in the older type of Irish script). There is a nice piece of sculpture in the green opposite the church.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Young trees were seen at a number of points throughout the village. Otherwise, not much appears to have been achieved under this heading and you do not note any activities on the entry form - though you do say that the river will be cleaned at a future date, which will be a start. The neighbourhood of Gort a' Choirce is rich in wild-life habitats as can be seen from the mature trees, the riverine and estuarine environment, proximity to the sea and the wonderful strands. What is needed at first is simple measures to interpret nature for the public and particular for the urban dweller: such as illustrated boards showing native birds (in one village over 50 different birds have been identified), trees, plants, etc. A project like this can stem from study done in school, including competitions as to (for example) finding, naming and drawing the greatest number of wild flowers. This can lead to more elaborate conservation projects. There is advice to be found in the Tidy Towns book.

Litter Control:

You have done well under this heading. Very little disposable litter was seen on the date of the visit, except in the vicinity of Ardan Muire. This is undoubtedly due to the clean-ups which you have organised, to the school children's posters, etc. Congratulations to all those involved.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an average mark given in the first year of this new category - a category that will assume greater importance as time goes on. The bring bank at the parish hall was well patronised and was tidy on the date of the visit. A recycling unit has been established in Dungloe which is a fair distance away to bring larger items; perhaps advice from the local Authority will provide a solution.

Tidiness:

There is quite an amount to be accomplished. Some dereliction was seen, particularly near Teach Maggie Dan. There is a neglected house near the Maclomhair garage that could deteriorate very quickly. An untidy site was seen near a house for sale opposite the barber's. Several otherwise well-painted houses did not have their gables painted to match and this is very eye-catching as the gables are often the most obtrusive part of a building.

Residential Areas:

It is the older houses in the centre of the village which give Gort a' Choirce its special quality, but much of the new housing is of good design. The housing near the shore which does not seem to be named below Ostan Loch Altan are very well spaced and smartly turned out: there is ample space for the planting of trees here (local advice should be sought upon what trees will do best in a seaside location). Newish house opposite Maclomhair's garage is imaginatively designed with good use made of planting. Ardan Muire is a fairly well kept area which was in need of kerbside weeding in many spots at the time of the visit; residents are responsible for the upkeep of their frontages, and this is a job that would take each householder only a few minutes every month. Fine stone roadside boundary walls were very favourably noted in many places, and many private homes have excellent roadside gardens.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Approach roads with well trimmed verges give a good sense of anticipation as one comes into Gort a' Choirce. Road signage in the Irish language was clear and is appreciated, as were the 'Welcome' signs at either end of the village. Street lighting standards looked well. Surfaces were reasonably good especially on the main road and very good going down to the new houses.

General Impression:

It was a real pleasure for this adjudicator to revisit Gort a' Choirce and to see the air of prosperity in the village and the many improvements that have been made. It is hoped that some of the above comments will be useful. You have done well under most headings; Wild Life and Nature, and Tidiness, are the ones where a greater effort is needed and where in the fullness of time significant additional marks could be picked up.

Every good wish to this enterprising committee in its impressive initiatives.