

# Tidy Towns Competition 2006

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Raphoe** Ref: **708**  
County: **Donegal** Mark: **252**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **17/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	41
The Built Environment	50	31
Landscaping	50	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	33
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	8
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>252</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Your remarks on your entry form are unusually candid in pointing out areas of dereliction, and your map is splendidly detailed - just what is required. Are you involving new residents in your work? Some committees have found that by recruiting newcomers they are able to make use of additional skills and experience. Thank you for the very interesting selection of relevant brochures.

### **The Built Environment:**

Raphoe's religious past is conspicuously manifest in the most prominent buildings. The landmark Cathedral with its superb Celtic-revival door is the outstanding example; its interior is also reverently maintained: it should be more widely known that the work of three of Ireland's foremost artists of the early 20c is represented in the stained glass. The Roman Catholic church with its Hiberno-Romanesque motifs is beautifully kept, as is the traditional town-hall type architecture seen in the Presbyterian church. It is a great pity that a new purpose has not yet been found for the imposing Scots Church which has a forlorn appearance not quite concealed by its splendid yews. The pristine Orange Hall was admired and also the dignified Masonic Hall. The many school buildings of the neighbourhood were all kept up to a good standard. Not all of the traditional street houses going back 200 years or more were fully appreciated by their owners; some, at comparatively little expense, could be shorn of recent excrescences and the fine original fabric revealed. Many of such buildings were in need of a simple coat of paint. It would be a useful exercise if the paint could be removed from the rustication around the main door of the Volt House. Harte's (for sale) is the kind of example that you could do without, and it is a pity that the Maxol station is so prominent in the Diamond, clean and neat though it is. The children's murals in two places are great fun and more of these would be welcomed especially where drab surroundings need lightening up.

### **Landscaping:**

While the planting in the Diamond enriches that space no end, there did not seem to be another major landscaping project where they would be expected, such as on important intersections or approaches - the local Authorities have provided excellent landscaping of roundabouts, for example, in other centres; it is appreciated that this takes time and money. Small areas of planting, and features such as floral tubs and window boxes, brighten the town considerably.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Your wild life newsletter and the list of designated wildlife areas (with the lovely long-eared owl on the cover) demonstrate how much activity there is under this heading. The involvement of children in nature-appreciation projects is splendid. Oakfield Park was visited; although the sign stated that it should be open at the time, it was not; however, a fair impression of the high quality of planting and rehabilitation could be seen through the gates. This is a first class initiative, and the people of Raphoe and visitors to the town are very lucky indeed to have access to it.

### **Litter Control:**

Your anti-litter programme is clearly doing well. The pictures of school children on a clean-up outing tell their own story, and the FAS workers must be doing a good job too, because there was very little disposable litter in the town at the time of the visit.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

This is an above average mark in the first year of this new category, a category which will assume greater importance as time goes on. Your enclosures show how two of the schools are involved in the Green Flag scheme and this is admirable. It has been noted that your own staff recycle paper and cardboard.

### **Tidiness:**

It is good to read that you have effectively declared war on flyposting and graffiti: hardly any of these were seen. Some derelict buildings, untended boundaries and gateways - look at Castle Road and Guest House Street - and untidy development sites (these are unavoidable, but tend to be prolonged) such as the one at St Eunan's Terrace, give an overall poor impression, being so eye-catching. Mass-produced signage and advertising on some business premises does not help.

### **Residential Areas:**

The older housing stock in the centre of the town is what gives Raphoe its special character; comments have been made about this under 'Buildings' (above). It is good that you organise a Tidy Estates competition. Congratulations to the people of St Eunan's Terrace on their 50th anniversary! - this estate was undergoing a welcome makeover; a pity the untidy development site below it is so invasive (for the moment). Terrace houses on Railway Road were quite neatly kept. At Castle Grove there is ample space for more planting. The entrance to Castle View obviously takes its inspiration from what can be seen across the town! Montgorry estate is promising: it was good to see fine wooden fencing and young trees already in place. Use your influence to encourage developers and builders towards infill housing on vacant sites, matching the adjoining homes.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

Some streets still need better surfacing; Castle Road and Guest House Road were both very well surfaced. Street furniture, including lamp standards, is of high quality in the Diamond, as is the internal town signposting. Several examples of very fine stone wall-building, such as on the Stranorlar road, were favourably noted.

### **General Impression:**

What is needed most - and it is clear that you are very much aware of this - is new uses for abandoned buildings and the restoration of same to the highest standards still seen. This is more important and more urgent than investing in, for example, cosmetic landscaping. You may feel that general progress is slow, but to the outsider who has not been in the town for some years, a great deal has been accomplished. Congratulations on this, and best wishes for bringing this historic centre back to its former importance.