

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Stradbally** Ref: **420**
County: **Laois** Mark: **223**
Category: **C** Date(s): **27/07/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	41
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	21
Litter Control	50	18
Waste Minimisation	20	0
Tidiness	30	12
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	32
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	223

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Stradbally to the 2006 Tidy Towns Competition. Stradbally has a large Tidy Towns Committee of 16 people and enjoys good agency support and that is so important for future progress. Your work with the Green Schools programme is valuable; have the schools achieved this status yet? Your involvement in the Golden Mile Competition is noted and this sits well with your Tidy Towns work. The adjudicator notes that a Tidy Towns Work Programme or Plan for Stradbally was not submitted with the entry documentation. All towns and villages are required to have a simple straight forward 3 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 for Stradbally 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:

We await with interest the proposed study on the Court House and the restoration of this building to its former glory would be a very worthwhile project provided that future viability is guaranteed. The work on the cleaning of the Market house and nearby toilets was noted in your documentation. Much litter was noted on adjudication day at the Market house. The iron framework here needs to be painted together with the low railing. The presentation of the Gents Toilet was quite simply appalling on adjudication day. Much litter was noted on the way into the toilet, and the facilities were filthy with much graffiti. The adjudicator is of the view that it would be better to close this toilet if it cannot be maintained in such a way as to be presentable to local people and visitors alike. The new public lighting and under-grounding of cables was noted in the Market house area and this adds to the presentation of that part of Stradbally. The presentation at the school was good apart from the road boundary wall that needed to be painted. Weed growth at the base of the wall was

noted here also. The Daniel Dunne premises dated 1912 stands out in Stradbally as an example of a good presentation and attractive old lettering at the T. Handy premises also caught the eye. The presentation of the area around the Mill House Studios has improved since last year. This is externally an attractive restoration of an old stone and red brick mill building. Some good use of colour was noted on the main street and some of the older two storey town houses here have attractive door detailing such as that at the Simpson premises.

Landscaping:

The new flower tubs and trees help to soften the presentation of the built environment of Stradbally effectively. At the Rathmore road junction new flower bed and bog oak feature was quite attractive and well maintained. Further along at the Abbeyleix road junction the landscaped area there adds much to the presentation of this busy junction. Some colourful planting was noted at the base of trees. The adjudicator is of the view that this can detract from the beauty of the natural trees. However this is just the view of one person and this has not affected your marks awarded in any way.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The disabled access to the shore of Stradbally Lake was noted and indeed this is a very attractive amenity area. The decoration of the fishing premises was a little too colourful for such a lovely peaceful rural location. Apart from some litter the lakeshore Stradbally area was quite well presented. The Sli na Slainte walk is an excellent addition to the Stradbally 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 further the wildlife potential of Stradbally, 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 the Stradbally area. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, reed marsh, bogs
- 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 the Stradbally area. This need not be an expensive survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable person locally 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 to 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 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:

Unfortunately litter control in Stradbally on adjudication day was found to be very poor. There certainly seems to have been a decline in the control of litter since the 2005 Report. Litter was noted on all approach roads, at the school, the lakeshore and in Court House Square. The situation at the entrance to the Gents Toilets and the Market House was very bad.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a new category in the Tidy Towns Competition introduced in 2006. The purpose of this new category is to encourage Tidy Towns Committees and the community that they support to get involved in projects that will reduce waste and encourage recycling. Marks can be gained by Stradbally for the promotion of best practice. This can include community guidance on methods of reducing waste, segregating litter during clean up events. You could also consider a partnership with local firms and businesses to encourage them to reduce unnecessary waste.

Tidiness:

An untidy areas with a field gate was noted at the 80 KPG sign on the Abbeyleix approach road. Some of the road signs were found to be in need of washing and this included the Major Junction Ahead sign near the school on the approach to Stradbally. Some of the seats in Stradbally are in need of painting and that included the seat near the Fire Station. To the side of the Credit Union a very untidy small area was noted, surrounded by wire mesh fencing panels.

Residential Areas:

Your close involvement with Residents Associations is obviously productive as housing estates were found to be quite well presented. The old stone cottages at the Carlow end of the town looked really well and provided a good introduction to Stradbally from that approach road. The fine town houses in the centre of Stradbally were generally quite well presented and a number appeared to have been freshly painted recently. Again this year the residential properties in Court House Square were excellently presented. This is a very attractive open area with well landscaped grass areas.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The main approach roads were well presented with good verges and attractive roadside banks. On the Timahoe approach weed growth at kerbing was noted. The seat on the Vicarstown road needed to be painted. Overall the approach roads to Stradbally created a good first impression.

General Impression:

Stradbally continues to make some progress but litter control does need serious attention. We look forward to seeing how the plans for the Court House will have progressed by summer 2007.