

# Tidy Towns Competition 2006

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Carlingford** Ref: **489**  
County: **Louth** Mark: **242**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **05/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	42
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	30
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	15
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>242</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Thank you for the copy of the impressive three-year Development Plan. It has been very thoroughly researched and, when implemented in full, undoubtedly will go a very long way towards restoring Carlingford to the place which it held consistently for many years at the head of the county, indeed winning the National Award on one occasion. What is missing in the document is named target years for the completion of each project: the setting out of these dates will ensure a momentum in the work. The town enjoys a valuable tourist trade which is based on the quality of the scenic environment and the quaintness of the streets and buildings. Clearly you have it in mind that the town must retain the vestiges of the past in the best way possible, while going forward in matters such as modern infrastructure as well. Your connections with the principal official bodies, and the involvement of the students from the national school, is admirable. Are you involving newly-settled residents in your work?

### **The Built Environment:**

The medieval buildings and streetscape are what the visitor most remembers from Carlingford. Is it time that an approach was made to the Office of Public Works, which has undertaken such splendid work with the co-operation of other organisations on the complete rehabilitation of a number of ancient buildings – such as at Graiguenamanagh and Cahir – to take on the entire structure of Taaffe's Castle as well as the entrance to King John's Castle? There is certainly an appreciative public waiting to enjoy such initiatives. As usual, the RC Church was very well presented, as was the Heritage Centre, and the staff at the handsome Tourist Office are always helpful even on very busy days. O'Hare's Anchor Bar typifies what is best in vernacular architecture. Larkin's handsome facade was seen to be undergoing much-needed renovation. The fine new Four Seasons Hotel is well presented – it is a pity that the two flat-roofed wings, which do not blend with the more traditional gables, were allowed to pass at the planning stage. Several gables throughout the town were badly in need of whitewashing or painting – the recently sold Slieve Foy being the worst offender; these are private properties

and would not have been allowed by their owners to fall into such a condition in the days when Carlingford was the top town in the county.

### **Landscaping:**

It is good that the entrance to King John's Castle is under improvement. Planting at the Thomas D'Arcy Magee monument looked a little dishevelled on the date of the visit, but the shrubs and annuals along the boundary of the tennis courts were well nurtured and formed a pleasant display, as did other floral plantings throughout the town. The wooden-fenced grassed area on the sea-front near Beaufort is a charming amenity. Handsome metal brackets were devoid of hanging baskets – if that is what they are for – at the time of adjudication. It would be premature to propose an award for the initiatives at the Sailing Club until the very extensive development in the immediate area is complete.

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

Initiatives in this category mentioned for the neighbourhood of King John's Castle at No. 2 on the Plan are particularly apt for Carlingford, where a wealth of mountain, meadow, woodland and marine elements meet. It is good to read that both rivers have been cleaned.

### **Litter Control:**

The visit was made on a Bank Holiday in order to observe the crowds of visitors and to suggest, if possible, any means that could be taken to lessen the problem of littering. As it happened, there was very little litter, and while picnic tables were very much in demand no conspicuous litter was dropped in those areas up to 4 pm, or in the other places frequented by the crowds. This was most commendable. Your anti-litter plan is obviously working well, and it is hoped that this trend will continue. If it does not, well-publicised fines for littering, whether to visitors, traders or residents, can have a salutary effect. Congratulations on this big step forward, and congratulations to the teams who pick up litter when this is required.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

The Bring Centre was clean and neat. Do you make use of the extensive recycling facility at Dundalk? The mark is a nominal one in the first year of this category.

### **Tidiness:**

Unpainted or discoloured gables in prominent places have been mentioned above. Some poorly maintained gates and roadside boundaries on the sea front were also noticed. One particularly unkempt building was seen beside the Adventure Centre – this is a prominent position. Kerbside weed was not in evidence. The toilets are first class, and very hygienically maintained.

### **Residential Areas:**

It is the older houses in the town centre that help to create Carlingford's special charm, along with the castles and the gateway. These are almost invariably kept with real pride. The varying stages of development at Harbour Cottages are all most impressive, especially the high-gabled dormered and slated roofs – some of appropriately Scandinavian influence were seen. The mix of traditional and modern textures in walls and facings was admired. When the trees grow up this will be an entirely delightful neighbourhood. The same may be said of Oyster Court. Some renovations of older properties are imaginative and in keeping with the ethos of the town.

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

Improvements to the car parks were favourably noted. New and renovated stone boundary walls here and there were also favourably noted. Road surfaces and paving were generally very good. (Incidentally, a watermain cover – probably one of several – in the neo-Celtic style used in the early year of the Free State, was seen: this is a collector's item!)

### **General Impression:**

It is always a delightful experience to visit Carlingford, though in very recent years there have been some disappointments due to neglect and, possibly, lack of the kind of initiative that is needed to keep pace with standards that are rising everywhere. This situation seems to be changing very much for the better, and, if you follow your Development Plan, it will certainly change even more so. Urgently required is the painting of neglected town-centre wall and gables, and in the very long term, would it not be wonderful if Taffe's Castle were fully restored to the condition it was in at the time when it was built? – Best wishes in your endeavours.

