

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Drogheda** Ref: **491**
County: **Louth** Mark: **245**
Category: **H** Date(s): **04/06/2006**
10/08/2006

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	40
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	13
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	245

Overall Development Approach:

It was very encouraging to read such a positive entry form, and to see a considerable number of boldly taken initiative resulting in several improvements, for Drogheda has lagged in the past behind somewhat behind other towns of its size but which do not have nearly so many advantages of location and history. You are one of the few centres without a Tidy Towns Committee, and this may work well because the organisers of the competition are right at the centre of things – the Local Authority; on the other hand, committees of enthusiastic people do seem to be able to draw together others in a concerted burst of community spirit, individuals who are moved to take steps that demonstrate their personal pride in a street or housing estate. Have you thought of forming an advisory committee to work under the Council? Thank you for your easily read map which tells what is needed at a glance.

The Built Environment:

The list of well presented fine old buildings will not be reiterated here: suffice to add that these were noted again with admiration. The redevelopment of a considerable number of old warehouses and their reinstatement as attractive elements of the streetscape has also been favourably mentioned before. Some of the business premises in the main shopping streets still have unnecessarily gaudy mass-produced signage which is not commercially advantageous and detracts considerably from the visual amenity. However, since this adjudicator's last visit (more than half-a-dozen years ago) the horrendous mix of crumbling older buildings, ill-designed new ones and vacant spaces on the north bank of the Boyne has been enormously improved. On the south-east bank the near completion of Scotch Hall is the most important achievement this year: from a distance its bulk is quite daunting, but from the quayside the eye is attracted by the imaginative juxtaposition of cool modern profiles and materials interspersed with arresting reminders of the past. The space afforded between new structures to enable a view of the Gothic steeple of St Mary's shows great flair at the design stage. The elegant De Lacy Bridge makes a wonderful contrast to the massive viaduct further

downstream and is an appealing and visual and practical addition to the town.

Landscaping:

Most of the landscaping in Drogheda consists of well maintained open spaces with broad lawns and some shrubs, and this is admirable. The sweep of the lawn rising up from opposite the bus station towards the Motte catches the eye in a most positive way, reminding one of the song 'the green grassy slopes of the Boyne'. The wide undulating spaces of the Glen provide a splendid open amenity to the neighbouring estates. The more modest green with trees and shrubs at Ballymakenny Road was favourably noticed. At the time of judging the playground in the riverside park had attracted dozens of children – this is another very worthwhile facility. Shrubs and herbaceous beds surrounding the Holy Family church show how with a little imagination a pleasant building can become the centrepiece of an impressive site; further attractive bedding was seen at the crescent of Highfield. The improvement scheme Moneymore appeared to be progressing well. Nothing exceptional was seen, but the standard is high throughout.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It is good to read that an Environmental awareness officer has been appointed; this invariably leads to greater appreciation of the resources by the public and to suitable initiatives – these will be looked forward to. The warning balls on the trans-Boyne cables are a thoughtful asset. From your notes and from observation it is clear that roadside hedges on the outskirts are respected, and obviously Drogheda, with its riverine, estuarine and sylvan hinterland is perfectly placed for sensitive enhancements.

Litter Control:

The annual clean-up listed in your notes assisted by Drogheda Concentrates is clearly proving effective. On the date of judging several of the black spots mentioned by last year's adjudicator were virtually litter-free: Donore Road, Rathmullan Park, Platin, Duleek Street, West Street and the notorious Bus Station. Congratulations to all the official bodies who helped, and especially to individual residents, and it is hoped that this aspect will continue to improve with their help and goodwill. Places where litter was evident on judging date were the steps and inclines leading from the town level to Highfield, Rowan Heights, Maryfield and Moneymore.

Waste Minimisation:

Bring banks that were seen were tidy and busy. The recycling centre described on Collon Road was not visited because closed for Sunday – it was said to have opened for the first time only three days previously – but certainly such a facility is an important step. After a year of operation it will be interesting to see how it is going in 2007.

Tidiness:

There is still a comparative amount of dereliction, especially in side streets, but not nearly so much as heretofore. The area immediately to the west of the railway is seen by several hundred travellers from Belfast daily and creates a very poor impression of Drogheda – an impression which is not sustained on a walk through the town. However, the derelict – yet quite charming - small street houses in this area and the desolate industrial sites do need urgent attention. Industrial areas elsewhere, such as between Platin and Donore Road, were generally tidy, though there was considerable variation between sites from the beautifully maintained to the mildly scuffy. The latter should be attended to. Over-enthusiastic shop signage has been referred to earlier.

Residential Areas:

Some of the fine Georgian houses in the Fair Street neighbourhood are in need of attention – they form what is a significant part of what is Drogheda's charm. The run of pretty small dwellings facing the rivers under Millmount look reasonably well at present but they should be assiduously retained in any major urban re-development. Cottages built quite recently by the Boyne in an attractive traditional style with brick facings are now overpowered by their neighbouring apartment buildings – not a sensitive planning decision. The rehabilitation of former warehouses and mills has been praised under 'Buildings' above. Many cul-de-sac estates such as Bryanston and Stameen are superbly kept with now mature trees and gardens. Deepforde and Grangerath show promise, though the latter's portals are somewhat awesome. Wheation Hall, between the N1 and the railway is well laid out with first class local signage and admirable tree planting.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Street furniture, grass verges, signage and road surfacing on the N1 approach from Dublin are excellent; it was seen that road realignment was in progress on the Dundalk approach. The unnamed road – not marked on the map either – that joins the N1 to Bellewstown road is well laid out and must surely provide an essential and long-awaited link. Street and estate name plates are few in this neighbourhood. Traffic in the centre

streets seems to be as chaotic as it ever was but this will certainly improve when the work on West Street is finished. Very good new paving was noted on the new corner of the the Marks & Spencer premises at Peter Street. It was good to see fine stone walls having been built at Rathmullan. The bleak Lourdes Hospital Car Park was pristinely clean and tidy – it would be improved by softening with trees and other planting.

General Impression:

Drogheda's past is blending with its present in a welcome way that is becoming more apparent. The desecration some years back of handsome street houses – note the upper storeys of Penneys, Dunnes and the Post Office in West Street – is something which today's generation would not allow. The symbol of a new age in urban design and living is De Lacy Bridge – this will probably become iconic before long. With good thinking along such lines, Drogheda will, hopefully, attain a much higher place in this competition than it has done to date.

Second Round Adjudication:

Drogheda is extremely lucky in that the town has the beautifully curving River Boyne as a strong geographical feature. One gets the feeling that this river is fully integrated into the life of Drogheda. The well landscaped sloping banks that sweep down to the river in the general Wellington Quay area help to reinforce this impression. On the day of 2nd round adjudication major roads works were in progress along West Street that disrupted traffic flows seriously. Near the Abbey Shopping Centre the yellow and black bollards at the entrance to the pedestrian river bridge needed to be painted. The adjudicator had not seen the Bru building before and the end curve of the building reflects in some way the curve of the river nearby, while the red brick of this development echos the red brick of the larger building across the river. The riverside walk along the side of the Bru building appeared to be a valued local amenity. Derelict buildings continue to pose a challenge for Drogheda such as the derelict property noted in Duke Street. Hopefully appropriate redevelopment will resolve those issues in time. New street name plaques are needed on many streets, both old and new and ideally these should also use the Irish language. Quite a lot of graffiti was noted in various areas around Drogheda and this included the lane to the side of the Abbey Shopping Centre leading to West Street. The brick buildings running from Free School Lane to Palace Street were favourably noted. At the Community Services building the inappropriate signage noted in the 2005 Report is still in place. Litter control appeared to be quite good and maintained the standard noted at 1st round adjudication. The 2nd round adjudicator is of the view that Drogheda has yet to see its best times in the Tidy Towns Competition and you have made significant progress this year. We look forward to visiting your 2007 projects next summer.