

# Tidy Towns Competition 2006

## Adjudication Report

Centre: **Kells** Ref: **579**  
County: **Meath** Mark: **232**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **26/06/2006**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2006
Overall Development Approach	50	37
The Built Environment	50	34
Landscaping	50	33
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	18
Litter Control	50	27
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	24
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>232</b>

### Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Kells to the 2006 Tidy Towns Competition. This town is steeped in heritage and the Heritage Trail is a most interesting way of getting to know Kells. Your committee appears to be very well structured and organized and the adjudicator commends the fact that there are ten junior committee members. The members appear to be putting in major hours per week on issues such as your litter patrols and this commitment is significant. Traffic is indeed a most serious problem for Kells. The adjudicator notes that a Tidy Towns Work Programme or Plan for Kells 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 Kells 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. It was unfortunate that you were not able to provide a street map of Kells to assist in the adjudication.

### The Built Environment:

The adjudicator wonders if there is a formal development plan for Kells. Walking around the various streets one gets the impression that there is a lack of a coordinated approach to the development of the town. You have made excellent progress in the last year on the issue of derelict sites and some problem areas remain such as Castle Street. Can you get permission from the owners to blank out the windows and doors with marine plywood? This can then be painted matt black and window glazing bars painted in white. Doors and door panels can be treated in the same way. As a temporary solution to derelict property this is quite acceptable from a Tidy Towns point of view. The Kells Community School and grounds stands out on the Dublin / Navan approach road and the mature trees at this school are really beautiful. At the nearby Swimming

Pool the windows are badly in need of painting. The other schools in this area all are presented to a high standard. The Town Hall in Kells is a very attractive building from an architectural point of view and the arched areas on either side add interest to the front elevation. A fine Ivy covered house beside this also stands out in the streetscape. However in Kells there are many poor shop-fronts that add little to the overall character of the town. Quite often signage is too large in scale for the front façade or the font is incorrect. In some cases modern inappropriately designed shop-fronts detract from older interesting 1st or 2nd floor elevations. Some good shop-fronts of course survive and the A. Crosby premises is one of these. Another is the attractive double shop frontage of Carroll in New Market Street. Shop-fronts such as these are irreplaceable and should be retained in any future street redevelopment that may take place. The many hanging baskets at The Headford Arms help to set off and highlight this large property. The Edmund Rice Centre at Bective Street is another important part of the built environment. The Kells Heritage Centre was visited and this provides a valuable introduction to the history of this historic town. Window clutter is another aspect of the built environment in Kells that needs attention. Some retail windows are so cluttered with notices and advertising that the real purpose of the shop is sometime snoot at first obvious.

### **Landscaping:**

The development of the creative garden is important in that the provision of more space for public enjoyment is a significant role of many Tidy Towns Committees. The two Workshops that you held for young people on the role of trees in the environment is highly commended as getting people interested in landscaping at an early age can bring so many future benefits to the individuals and Kells. You have planted new trees in Kells and future generations will thank you for this. Some good landscaping has been carried out by private firms and this includes a large landscaped area at The Door Depot on the Oldcastle road. The many hanging baskets, window boxes and flower tubs add much colour to a town that needs colour in some areas. However do not over do the provision of such planting; the process can be overdone and too many plants can obscure and otherwise interesting building.

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

It was an excellent initiative to encourage the two schools to develop wildlife areas at the schools, such as has been done at St. Colmcille's Boys School. The walkway on the Dublin / Headford road is a much appreciated amenity development. It is important that your Tidy Towns Committee would examine further the wildlife potential of Kells, 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 your area. Suggested habitats to be considered include the following –

- Urban habitats – gardens, waste ground, walls, graveyards, hedges
- Wetland habitats – rivers, ponds, lakes, canals, 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 Kells area.

This need not be an expensive survey. Perhaps there is a knowledgeable person locally in Kells who might undertake this task for you. Basically the survey would identify the animals, plants, birds, fish that inhabit the Kells 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 do draft a straight forward Plan for Kells 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. From the work already in hands by the schools getting their involvement in the wildlife survey should not cause too many difficulties.

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:**

As you have already documented there is a litter problem in Kells. The adjudicator noted these difficulties both on approach roads and on the town streets. This is despite the many hours per week that your committee

devotes to litter control. One cannot help but ask when the streets close by the kerb-stones were last swept. In many kerb areas there is an accumulation of cigarette butts, small litter items and dust. Some pavements would benefit greatly from being power-hosed. Piles of cardboard were stored on pavements obviously awaiting collection. Is there not a better way of arranging the collection of such waste? It certainly looks quite untidy and the reasons for the pavement storage may not be understood by visitors to your town.

### **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 Kells 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.

The fact that the four schools are involved in recycling programmes is significant. We would be very interested to read the details of what they are doing.

### **Tidiness:**

The various derelict buildings contribute to a general feeling of untidiness evident on adjudication day. Can you continue to speak to shop owners about the presentation of their frontages? The adjudicator is not in favour of the display of retail goods on the pavement as was noted in several places in Kells. Apart from looking rather untidy such displays can cause major difficulties for people in wheelchairs or the visually disabled. In a few areas with badly presented road signage was noted such as at the Athboy / Mullingar road junction.

### **Residential Areas:**

Weed growth at Newrath View was noted and the small grass areas at the pavements were poorly presented also. The row of cottages in Bective Street are very attractive and have a combination of stone, painted and pebble dashed frontages where good colour choices are generally used. Other attractive cottages were noted on the Cavan approach. The preservation of cottages such as these is important as they are part of the heritage of Kells. Good colour choice was noted with a number of the properties uphill from here to Suffolk Street. Attractive two stored terraced houses on the approach from Ardee to Castle Street are a feature of this area. At Magdelene Court weed growth at kerbing is a problem as is litter and a rather roughly presented landscaped area. The addition of trees to The Glebe would make a big difference to the presentation of that estate. Boundary walls and gable walls need to be painted at the Rockfield Road estate.

In a town the size of Kells that has so many housing estates it is not possible in one paragraph to sum up all estates in the town in terms of overall presentation. However the following recommendations are offered by the adjudicator who suggests that the Tidy Towns Committee bring these points to the attention of all estates in Kells.

- Road boundary walls will probably need to be painted twice each year especially on busy roads.
- Gable end walls though sometimes difficult to paint should be painted when the rest of the house is being painted.
- Timber fencing will require treatment at least twice per year.
- All estates should be encouraged to provide entrance name signs and directional signage within the estate.
- Green open space grass areas will need to be cut frequently if a quality presentation is to be achieved. Remember that grass will probably have to be cut back from the top of kerbing by hand. The provision of a few well chosen trees can often transform an open space.
- Areas to the back of estates can sometimes become dumping areas for cut grass and other materials.
- Simple landscaping at individual houses can often be very effective if the proper trees and shrubs are planted.
- By their nature estates can sometimes have litter control problems and this must be addressed by each individual estate in the town.

**Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

On the Moynalty approach road to the 60 KPH sign the banks and verges had not been cut. Good private properties were noted along this road. Public verges were roughly cut on the Cavan approach road though there were some good private verge presentations. On the Oldcastle approach weed growth at kerbing is a feature and public verges are poorly presented. The Dublin / Navan approach road needs a lot of work. On the Athboy road a lot of the verge areas are uncut. Weed growth was noted on the Dundalk / Ardee N.52 road, and the Mullingar approach road had had some work done on banks and verges.

**General Impression:**

Your committee has a very large area to work on and you deserve the maximum possible support available. The approach roads and litter issues together with derelict buildings are among the key problem areas. Good luck with all your projects for 2007.