

Tidy Towns Competition 2006

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castleblayney** Ref: **709**
County: **Monaghan** Mark: **199**
Category: **E** Date(s): **12/07/2006**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2006 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 33 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 26 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 27 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 15 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 25 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 9 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 12 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 22 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 24 |
| General Impression | 10 | 6 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 199 |

Overall Development Approach:

A very thorough survey of the town has been received, with thanks. This has been the first really comprehensive strategic plan for Castleblayney seen to date. If the recommendations in it are followed, and even a fair percentage of the targets met, it will be a huge step forward. Since Castleblayney first entered the competition it has always been a disappointment to have to report very slow progress in comparison to other towns of relatively similar size; though larger, Carrickmacross had similar problems when first entering, but overcame the majority of them quite rapidly through sheer hard work and determination. It would not be unhelpful to look at the achievements of that town, not so as to imitate, but so as to relate them to what could be possible in Castleblayney. The completion of the by-pass should help considerably, for the town is so choked with traffic it is difficult to appreciate its particular values and very real advantages. Please, when submitting your next map, mark in pen the names of all streets, roads and housing estates clearly on it.

The Built Environment:

Most of the principal public buildings and churches were, as usual, very well presented. The RC church was beautifully painted and looked well in its pleasantly planted grounds; the Church of Ireland church has immense dignity; it may be a heresy to suggest that a lowering of the rather forbidding wall would allow the passer-by to view its most attractive churchyard. Beech Corner Resource Centre was neatly maintained, with colourful floral adornments. The hospital on the Shercock Road, and the schools in the same neighbourhood, were all presented with a sense of pride - if this were Castleblayney's only street the town would be an immediate award-winner; unfortunately the town ends of the Monaghan, Carrickmacross and Keady roads are mainly a clutter of poorly designed business premises, mass-produced signage and advertising, poles and wires. West Street also has its share of untidy frontages, but not by any means are all of the buildings in these streetscapes are ill kept, that is simply the overall impression - the Allied Irish Bank, for example, is a model of brightness and decency: enquire within if they lose business due to their smart appearance. A very

encouraging development is the run of almost completed shops in West Street opposite the Dublin road: it is hoped that this fine new terrace will not be blemished by over-enthusiastic advertising. There are also several fine exceptions on Monaghan Street - such as the well presented Glencarn Hotel and the cool design of the Lidl supermarket in their well-kept surroundings. The most conspicuous building in the town, the handsome Market House, still looked shabby; it is hoped that it will be properly reinstated because it could be taken as a metaphor for what needs to be done at other locations.

Landscaping:

It is good to read that you plant bulbs for Spring flowering - it has always been a precept of the Competition that towns and villages should be pleasant to visit and live in at all times of the year. The planting at the junction of the Monaghan and Ballybay roads was looking splendid on the date of the visit, the cart a welcoming riot of colour; the flower-filled carts at Scoil Muire were equally impressive. Well nurtured tubs and hanging baskets were favourably noted in many places; it has to be mentioned in passing, however, that the fine hanging baskets on Keady road do not achieve their full value because of merging with the untidy signage of the street. Several very neatly designed small areas of landscaping were seen - such as a short stretch of tubs and bollards further out the Keady road, and a pretty shrubbery at the entrance to an un-named hillside estate further out the same road.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Plenty of signposted walks were seen around the superbly wooded Lake Muckno. It is unnecessary to mention what a splendid resource this lake is, both for the wild creatures that make its shores and slopes their home and for townspeople and visitors recreating themselves. The interpretative flora and fauna board was appreciated, though it was placed too high for some persons to read the text! (See also comment under Tidiness, below.)

Litter Control:

There was considerably less litter than on the visit a year ago. Congratulations to the volunteers who take part in clean-ups, and especially to schoolchildren. Considerable roadside litter was seen on the Keady road, however.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a slightly above average mark in the first year of this new category - a category that will become more and more important as time goes on. The bring-bank was tidy on the date of the visit. What was most encouraging was to read that the committee supplies a van to residential groups for waste pick-ups of various types of waste material.

Tidiness:

Areas of untidiness, however small, do have an unfortunate way of catching the eye, such as a corner of weeds and post-and-wire fencing on the Shercock road, a rusty corrugated roof next the Bloodstock Sales office, another unkempt site near the turn for Ballybay, and an excess of signs on the dignified gates of Hope Castle. Of more major concern, however, were the extensively weedy kerbs on the road to the lakeside facility, which give a poor impression of the approach to this fine amenity; an enclosure of what looked like discarded metalwork also detracted from the same location. Unsightly overhead wires (especially at the Monaghan Street end of West Street) have already been referred to. On Monaghan Street, several industrial/commercial buildings - among them the Renault outlet shown in your portfolio - were fairly overpowering appearance, but on closer inspection it seemed that really very little needed to be done about them other than discreet screening and tidying up of frontages. Each business should be responsible for its own curtilages.

Residential Areas:

Quaint dormered 19c cottages were seen in Church street, rendering this vista most attractive. Older houses opposite, some in poor repair, should be rehabilitated at all costs because it is these older streets that give Castleblayney its unique character. Another group of similarly picturesque houses quite some distance out the Keady should also be carefully preserved. The brick almshouses above the Dublin road looked very well indeed. Of the newer housing estates on the edge of the town, Crescent Hill was admired for its spacious lay-out and well-groomed frontages; un-named brick terraces off the Keady road looked most promising - if this scheme is not due for early completion the further side should be landscaped without delay.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Road surfaces were fair to good, except for the unbelievably rutted and potholed road to Lough Muckno. The elegant footbridge here was admired. Street furniture - lamp standards, seating, bollards - around the Market House and in West Street was first class, and should be extended to other town centre streets as early as

possible. (Once the by-pass is open, will there be a link road from the Keady road across the Monaghan road to join it? - because if not there will still be much heavy traffic through the town centre.)

General Impression:

Castleblayney has not yet reached its potential in the marking that one would expect from such a handsome and pleasantly situated town. Much is made in the documentation of forging links, holding meetings, joining forces and making applications: what is expected now is that these necessary preliminaries will lead to visible actions. All good wishes for considerable advances are offered for next year and thereafter.