

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonakilty** Ref: **669**
County: **Cork (West)** Mark: **293**
Category: **D** Date(s): **21/06/2007**
11/08/2007

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	36
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	38
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	293

Overall Development Approach:

Clonakilty has submitted a comprehensive application as ever. The ancillary material and maps were of great use on the day of adjudication. It is refreshing to note that you can still sustain massive committee numbers and no doubt their time and effort can be seen in the streets and environs of Clonakilty. Your overall approach demonstrates how a co-operative partnership approach can enhance the living environment for all and that all members of society play a part in achieving a common goal. Significant support from Clonakilty Town Council, FÁS, Clonakilty Business Association, Householders etc is commended and will hopefully remain into the future. Your participation in other similar competitions is commended and the creation of your new committee 'Sustainable Clonakilty' shows that you are in for the long haul!

The Built Environment:

Clonakilty is experiencing a considerable amount of redevelopment and new builds throughout the commercial and residential aspects of the town – this will undoubtedly add significantly to the urban fabric on completion in the coming years. The majority of shop fronts throughout the town centre are well presented although there are still some vacant and derelict sites that blight the overall impression. Barry Kirby's, O'Donovan's Hotel, the Post Office all were greatly admired. The new premises beside the A.I.B was being painted on the day of adjudication and close by SWS Property Services was been power washed. Spillars Lane was looking well as ever and your plans to regain 'public space' are eagerly anticipated. The Quality Hotel and Fernhill House Hotel were well presented particularly with regard to landscaping. Whites Service Station, Oracle and Emmet Square were also admired, as was the Children's Playground. Construction work was noted at Supervalu and the Catholic Church. Nuala's Corner, however, is in a prominent location and could do with a fresh coat of paint before next year's competition.

Landscaping:

The Bandon approach road was beautifully landscaped with a mix of mature indigenous trees, permanent shrubby planting, colourful bedding plants at the Grotto and well trimmed lawns. Vibrant planting was also admired at the signage for the Inchydoney Road. The centre feature in the John F. Kennedy Memorial Park was being planted on the day of adjudication and a number of council workers were sited trimming grass at a variety of locations throughout the town and its approach roads! O'Donovan Grove was also well landscaped as was the Recycling Centre.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It is good to see that work in this area is ongoing to include birds, trees and wild flowers with the help of local school children! Information Boards were noted at the fire station and 'Fauna of the Bay' and 'Seabirds' on the Inchydoney Road.

Litter Control:

In general, litter is not a problem in Clonakilty. However, litter was noted in Millgrove Estate and in O'Donovan Grove on the day of adjudication. You indicated in your application that one key problem area is the discarding of cigarette butts and unfortunately this is still a problem particularly within the town centre.

Waste Minimisation:

The Recycling Centre was busy on the day of adjudication and is obviously a substantial asset to Clonakilty. The Town Councils encouragement of the 3 R's was noted in the enclosed handbook and this is commended. It is good to see that the opening hours of the Centre have been extended on Saturdays at least for a trial period as this surely would be one of the busiest days?

Tidiness:

Croppy Park Road was immaculate in its presentation. Emmet Square was looking well on the day of adjudication however, on further investigation the public seating within the park look rather tired and should be refurbished before next year's competition. The 'Tenant's Information Handbook' is a wonderful idea and details all aspects of tenancy from repairs and maintenance to recycling. As identified in your application derelict and vacant sites detract from the overall colourful terraced façade of the Clonakilty streetscape and you seem to have this in hand. An old outhouse with rusted roof took from the overall appearance of Fairfield Terrace. Please pay attention to back areas that may be overgrown and where kerbside weeds have taken hold eg. Ardfield Road.

Residential Areas:

There is an undeniable sense of pride in Clonakilty and this is clear from the majority of residential areas. One of the main tasks into the future is to attract support from new residential areas and integrate them into the strong ethos within the town that has evolved over the years. Many B&B's in Clonakilty are well presented and among those admired on the day of adjudication were Cambria B&B and Sugan B&B. Woodland estate looked well and the planting of laurel hedges throughout gave a sense of unity. The new development at Fernhill Woods is looking well but grassy areas were slightly overgrown. Fairfield Terrace was well painted for the most part and the residences adjacent to the Old Brewery Montessori were also greatly admired. Park View was also neat and tidy.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Among the main areas for concern are the maintenance of ageing signage, grass verges on approach roads and kerbside weeds in back areas. For instance the cul de sac with the Stables and Gullrin House had a considerable amount of kerbside weeds and the corner opposite Supervalu was quite overgrown considering its prominent location.

General Impression:

Clonakilty never disappoints! The overall impression is excellent and it is obvious that you have a well-knit committee that is supported by a variety of agencies and this is paying dividends. Every town in Ireland has problems of dereliction, overgrown verges and littering but Clonakilty is unrelenting in its quest for perfection. Well done and keep up the good work!

Second Round Adjudication:

Clonakilty is well known nationally as being a very well cared for town. Its integrity as a vibrant example of a good Munster town serving a broad and varied community within its boundaries and in the extensive rural hinterland beyond has been upheld by the long term serious work and endeavours of its dedicated public representatives, officials and community. It is interesting to note that the application was submitted by the Town Clerk. This in itself speaks volumes for the commitment of the Town Council to the Tidy Towns overall

effort. There is of course the converse opinion that it would be preferable for the community to have to do this themselves. This adjudicator considers that in either event neither would be successful without the full support of the other. Having won the National Tidy Towns competition in 1999 Clonakilty has set itself a very high standard to aspire to!

The second round adjudicator had not been to Clonakilty for a few years and was delighted with almost everything seen! Probably highest on the list of "good things" is the retention of the vernacular architecture and streetscapes with their traditional shopfronts, facilitated well by Cork County Council's Architects and Planning Departments, and involving a far sightedness on their part, but also on the part of the owners and developers of the area. The worst thing is the traffic congestion and all that goes with such congestion. Walking around the pleasant centre one was constantly bombarded by the noise and fumes ensuing. Admittedly it was a Saturday in the busy tourist season, but it was awful! Pedestrianisation is critical if the ambience created is to be enjoyed. Spiller's Lane is hopefully a beginning.

The overall Built Environment is special, and can be enjoyed in some tranquillity in Emmet Square and along the riverbanks. The vibrant use of colour is in general a County Cork phenomenon. There is one thing however which has to be said with regard to a number of buildings which is urgent. Some are in a poor state of repair, and their integrity is being compromised due to lack of repair or maintenance. This can easily be missed given the colourful nature of most of the shopfronts at ground floor level, but one has to look upwards to first and second floor level and downwards at roofscapes and chimney structures from above. Bright colours also look very poorly when badly maintained – even if the structure is sound. An example of a shopfront in a disintegrating state is "Tom Sheehy & Co." Astna Street. The upper level of "Clontackle and Leisure" needs renewal, and it still has its timber sash windows, something which should be retained insofar as is possible everywhere. As the previous adjudicator pointed out "Nuala's Corner" - located on a very strategic corner is badly in need of repainting, and window maintenance. An example of a poorly maintained new shopfront is Clonakilty Chiropody Centre on Wolfe Tone Street. The Old Linen Hall on the corner of Connolly St. and Casement St. needs some cleaning. Standing outside the Church of Ireland one can see the rear of Pearse St. premises needing attention. Much admired around the town were Gleesons, Connolly St. (fine vernacular form - apart from newer inserted second floor windows over shopfront), Cash and Co. and M.J. O'Neill (especially for their distinctive lettering) and Barry Kirby Pearse St. for its shopfront and colour coordinated floral display.

In relation to floral displays it has to be said that this adjudicator echoes the feelings of last year's (2006) second adjudicator who said "there is a feeling in parts of the town that the visitor is being overpowered by hanging baskets and window boxes and that these obscure some of the associated properties" The climax of this feeling came when the adjudicator had to lift a hanging basket aside to read the interesting plaque in Recorder's Lane! Remember if you have quality buildings as you have in Clonakilty, there is no need to festoon them with fuss.

Emmet Square is a tranquil place despite car parking and car movements, and it was good to see it being used on the day of adjudication by locals (teenagers in park) and curious tourists alike. It is a lovely Georgian Square, which Clonakilty is so lucky to possess. Please resist the insertion of uPVC! A splendid doorcase on the Western side was particularly admired with its vibrant use of blue and yellow. The doorcase of the building at the South East corner (doorcase facing O'Rahilly St.) needs cleaning/repainting. Naturally the Post Office was admired, as were many other buildings in the town such as the churches and renewed Brewery and Mill areas. It is also great to see the local town council office using a good existing building, and the Library in the old mill, and the adjacent two buildings being used by public agencies – Enterprise Board and Health Centre. The latter needs some cleaning and new blinds!

Street furniture in general is conservative, and a rethink in this area when upgrading should be considered. The seating (and gates) in Emmet Square Park need renewal as already pointed out by the first adjudicator. The bins are old and do not match one another. Some weeding appeared necessary outside the stone wall boundary of the park at the church (North) side on adjudication day.

Landscaping is good on the Bandon approach with native monbretia, dog roses and fuchsia, (your "trade mark" in West Cork) all so much a part of West Cork and indeed rural Ireland in late summer. The grounds of the Church of Ireland were particularly neat. The railings of the Catholic Church grounds are very fine, but require moss / lichen removal.

The Western approaches are good too, and the only thing that needs attention here appears to be concrete post and wire fencing in the vicinity of Quay motors needing upgrading. The playground is excellent.

The Stables / Gullrin House cul-de-sac appeared to have had a weeding session since the first adjudication, although the garden on the corner was very overgrown. We look forward to the development of Deacy's Quay area as an amenity.

A plethora of signage took somewhat from the general approaches. Admittedly some of it is seasonal also e.g. the circus, and Rathbarry threshing festival. But there needs to be some control on such annual invasion! It is understood how difficult this can be, but the local authority may remove unauthorised signage on public space perfunctorily as far as we are aware. There are also too many permanent signs. This is a challenge in a popular tourist area, but one which needs rationalisation locally. Signage of the road variety in general needs upgrading - such as a decapitated and rusty sign on the Bandon approach road. Some very rusty uprights on signage at the beautiful courthouse detract from the overall effect. This issue has been flagged also by the first adjudicator. The railings beside the bus stop need painting. Two gates along a magnificent stretch of stone wall at Lamb Street need renewal/painting.

The derelict site at the rear of Supervalu (separate to it) in front of a warehouse needs at least to be screened. It is located in the vicinity of the very well landscaped Sports Area and Gael Scoil, and well landscaped residential area. Again to the East the award winning local authority housing was much admired in the Convent Road / Hill area with its typical West Cork slating detail. The Old Timoleague Road needed some weeding along a stone wall section and at the boundary of Kilgarriiff School.

All residential areas visited were exemplary. Special mention can be made of Inis Sioda, Sea Breeze Heights, Casement Park, and Fairfield Terrace.

Little litter was in evidence anywhere barring a derisory amount in Emmet Sq. Park (mainly cigarette butts). Well done!

This report of the second adjudication day is unusually long, but this is only because there was so much of interest to observe in Clonakilty from a Tidy Towns point-of-view, and we hope some of the comments will be helpful. Thank you for your patience in reading it all
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