

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardee** Ref: **488**
County: **Louth** Mark: **259**
Category: **D** Date(s): **25/06/2007**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	45
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27
Litter Control	50	29
Waste Minimisation	20	14
Tidiness	30	12
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	259

Overall Development Approach:

It is heartening to see that there is a high level of participation in tidy towns in Ardee. According to the entry form submitted, there are 19 members on the committee and this appears to include representation from all the residents committees in the town. This level of participation illustrates the commitment of the residents of Ardee to improve their town and achieve success in this competition. The decision to appoint a Schools Liaison Officer is a very good one as involving schoolchildren in the tidy towns effort will not only help to reduce litter levels, but also improve participation in future years. The Schools also deserve congratulations for obtaining green flag status and the adjudicator wishes the remaining 2 schools well in their efforts to achieve same. It is noted that the Committee retains close contact with both Louth County Council and funding and support agencies such as LEADER. This is considered to be particularly important as close co-operation with local authorities is vital to achieving success in a town the size of Ardee. Is there a Fas scheme that could also be included? The three year plan included with the entry form is also impressive. The adjudicator particularly liked the practice of stating whether a project was 'done' on the schedule. However, I agree with the comments of the previous years adjudicator with respect to including all of the information on the map. It can be difficult during adjudication to carry a series of documents on the inspection, particularly given the weather we are currently experiencing! It would also be interesting to see the information leaflet for shop owners on the Main Street, can this be included the next time around? The Committee should also try and include actions for all the tidy towns categories in their action plan to ensure that it is as comprehensive as possible. These comments aside, the overall development approach is very impressive and this is reflected in the high mark achieved.

The Built Environment:

There are a number of excellent buildings in the town that caught the attention of the adjudicator. St Ledgers Castle and Hatches Castle are tremendous assets to have in a town and they help to give the town great

character. Old St. Marys Church and Wesley Church are also attractive buildings and the Ulster Bank and the Bank of Ireland Buildings make a positive contribution to the streetscape. Work seemed to be in its closing stages on the new shopping centre immediately adjacent to the Main Street and the adjudicator looks forward to seeing it completed next year. The Mid Louth Joint Civic Services Centre on the Ardee Road will also be impressive and the various sculptures (such as Cuchulainn and Ferdia) located around the town add interest for the visitor. There are a significant number of derelict and vacant sites in the town which include; the site at the bridge, the boarded up site opposite the Centra, Hogans Interiors and Adjoining Texaco. Some poorly presented sites were also noted on the Main Street and they include the area adjacent to Suzies Deli, beside Joseph Woods and Deeside Supplies. Other buildings such as mid Louth Plant Hire and Butterlys also appear to be changing ownership. It is noted that this issue does not appear to be comprehensively dealt with in your action plan. It is suggested that a strategy is devised with Louth County Council for dealing with this problem and included in your plan for future years. This strategy could include contacting the owners of the buildings or sites or placing them on the derelict sites register. It is recommended that action is taken to address these derelict and vacant sites in order for further progress to be made in this category. There are also some excellent opportunities that are being missed. An old pump was noted outside the Fabrics Shop which could be restored.

Landscaping:

The work undertaken by the Committee on landscaping was particularly evident during adjudication. A number of excellent planting schemes were observed which include the roundabout and the entrance to the link road (on the Monaghan side of the town). The hanging baskets were also observed and they add lovely colour and interest, particularly to the Main Street. The Committee are also to be congratulated on their maintenance of the public green areas such as the riverside walk, which is a lovely amenity to have in the centre of town and the Fair Green.

The imaginative mature planting on the grounds of Scoil Mhuire Na Trocaire is particularly impressive as it provides colour all year round. The planting at various junctions throughout the town is also very attractive to the visitor. The maturing trees at Bridge Street car park are also very attractive. There are some additional opportunities for planting on Main Street - possibly for mobile planters which would add further colour and interest. There are also opportunities for landscaping at the Church opposite the School. Overall, however, the standard of landscaping is high and the Committee (and all others who were involved) are to be congratulated on their hard work.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

There are some fantastic natural amenities and parks available to the residents of Ardee. The Fair Green to the north of the town with its pleasant planting, play ground and interesting sculptures provides an excellent facility. The river walk in the centre of town providing an additional amenity that was well used at the time of adjudication. The Wildlife Garden at St. Marys Football Grounds was noted with interest. This is a fantastic initiative that involves school children and promotes wildlife and biodiversity in Ardee. The bridal walk also provides for a walkway through a woodland habitat. The railway walk is a lovely idea and the committee are commended on taking on this ambitious and interesting project. It was noted that signage is in place (as there was no problem finding it), but work remains to be done on surfacing in some areas. It is recommended that sufficient lighting is installed to provide for convenience and safety. Some signage on the walk would also be useful. However, the adjudicator feels that it achieves its objective by providing a tranquil contrast to walking in the centre of town.

Litter Control:

It was noted from the previous years report that litter was a problem in a small number of areas. These areas were checked during the adjudication and a big improvement noted. Well done to the Committee as your hard work was very noticeable in this category. It was particularly impressive to find areas such as the river walk and the railway walk, which are not supervised by the road or windows in some parts, was virtually litter free. In one or two areas litter persisted, such as Market House Lane. But a big improvement nonetheless.

Waste Minimisation:

Ardee is doing particularly well in this category with a total of 3 bring banks in the town. The availability of bring banks is regarded as a key component in reducing waste generation and the provision of 3 bring banks throughout the town means access to recycling facilities in Ardee is high. The involvement of the Tidy Towns in the production of an information leaflet on the subject (which was noted in your submission) is also to be commended and it is actions such as these that are encouraged in the tidy towns competition. The work of the Schools in Ardee in this area is also acknowledged. However, additional actions should be explored by the Committee such as segregating the litter collected and providing a composting area to generate compost for use in your landscaping projects. Actions like these will help the Committee to significantly improve your

performance in this category in future years and it is recommended that they are considered for inclusion in the action plan.

Tidiness:

The work undertaken by the Committee is particularly noticeable as a good standard of tidiness has been achieved in Ardee. The Committee appear to work particularly hard preventing weed growth on public pavements and pathways and this is to be commended – particularly given the exceptionally wet weather we have had. There is no evidence of graffiti and traffic management appears to be effective. As always, some improvements are possible. The use of temporary signage (i.e. signs protruding from barrels) should be avoided or kept to a minimum, the railings outside Hatches Castle need work. The placing of wires and cables underground on the Main Street would also help and the efforts of the Committee to achieve this are acknowledged. Large amounts of protruding signage were also noted on the Main Street. It is recommended that a strategy should be devised with Louth County Council for dealing with this matter and included in your action plan – this strategy could include a policy at County Council level prohibiting any additional protruding signs on the Main Street.

Residential Areas:

The residential areas of Ardee have achieved a very high standard of presentation and they are a credit to their residents associations and the Tidy Towns Committee. High standards have been achieved in landscaping and in general maintenance (such as grass cutting, weeding, litter collection) in all of the estates observed during adjudication. It is difficult to choose the most impressive of all the estates as they have all reached the same high standard, but perhaps Parc Ferdia is slightly ahead of the rest.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach roads to Ardee are generally very good with high quality surfacing and markings and clear, well maintained signage. The verges on the main approach roads (from the south and north) are also in relatively good condition. A small number of side streets were observed to be in poor condition with poor quality surfacing and poorly maintained verges. These include Markethouse Lane and the road leading down to the railway walk.

General Impression:

The hard work of the Ardee Tidy Towns Committee was clearly evident during adjudication and this is reflected in the high mark achieved. The adjudicator is confident that the level of commitment and endeavour shown by the Commitment will ensure continued progress for Ardee.