

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Drogheda** Ref: **491**
County: **Louth** Mark: **255**
Category: **H** Date(s): **23/06/2007**
05/08/2007

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	42
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	35
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	22
Litter Control	50	29
Waste Minimisation	20	11
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	255

Overall Development Approach:

The overall development approach employed by Drogheda in the tidy towns competition is obviously working as it has undergone a consistent and steady improvement in recent years. 2007 is no exception and in the view of the adjudicator, this progress has continued. The adjudicator noted in the entry form that a new approach was adopted for this year with the formation of the Tidy Towns Committee by Drogheda Town Council, which is comprised 18 members and includes 4 Town Council employees, 1 Louth County Council employee and a number of representatives of community and business groups. It is an interesting initiative and we await the results of this approach with interest. The advantages of a direct partnership with Drogheda Borough Council appear to be clear as it allows for a very good working relationship to be formed. It also appears to have led to an increased level of voluntary commitment by various residents associations and voluntary organisations which is very positive. It is observed on the entry form that the local schools are also involved by participating in the national spring clean initiative and other clean up activities. It is recommended that these links should be strengthened by trying to involve the schools in wildlife and waste minimisation projects undertaken by the Committee. This will not only inform local schoolchildren of these important issues, but it will also provide a valuable resource for the tidy towns Committee. The adjudicator would also like to thank the Committee for its submission, which was very detailed. However, while it is acknowledged that the entry form contained a detailed plan of action that set out the projects to be undertaken under the relevant headings, it is the opinion of the adjudicator that this could be improved by including timeframes for each project. This also allows the adjudicator to make an assessment of the progress on a year to year basis.

The Built Environment:

The built environment of Drogheda has undergone a number of big changes in recent years. The rapid growth of the town has led to the construction of many new buildings particularly in the town centre and the development of a large number of residential areas on the outskirts of the central areas. The result is a vibrant

mix of new and old structures that has its own charms. It is considered that the old Medieval section of Drogheda gives the town its distinctiveness and identity. Structures like the centrally located West Gate and the Old Abbey add great interest and are complemented by the other historical structures nearby such as the Tholsel and St Peters Church. The adjudicator also observed the newer developments, which include the St. Laurence Centre and also Scotch Hall, which adjoins the river. As these buildings replaced older industrial structures with new vibrant uses, they have made a very positive contribution to the streetscape. Despite all of these positive elements, dereliction still seems to be a problem, particularly beyond West Street where a number of buildings in bad, semi derelict condition were observed. These buildings include Donaghys Mill and West Gate House and it is unfortunate that this dereliction persists in such a central visible location. Given the involvement of Drogheda Borough Council in the Tidy Towns Committee, it is recommended that a strategy is devised to deal with this issue and included in your action plan. The numerous stepped laneways to be found in Drogheda are also considered to be one of its nicest features.

Landscaping:

The Committee have clearly been working hard on their landscaping projects for 2007. The planting schemes were observed at the Childrens garden in the Glen on the Termonfeckon Road were excellent and considered to be of quite high quality. The aerial photograph submitted was also noted and this clearly illustrates the dramatic shape of a salmon. It is also noted that additional trees have been planted in the Glen. This is encouraging as they can be accommodated in such a large space and they will make a significant contribution to visual amenity and to the biodiversity of the area. Landscaping and planting projects were also noted on the key approach roads to the town including the Rathmullen Road and North Road as well as the Termonfeckin Road. The provision of street tubs was also observed and these were very effective in each instance as they provided lovely summer colours making a very positive contribution to visual amenity. The other projects proposed under this category are noted and awaited with interest.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Drogheda enjoys some excellent advantages when it comes to parks and wildlife areas. The Committee (and Drogheda Borough Council) now appear to be taking full advantage of this with the development of the Boyne River Walk – where upgrading work was observed to be continuing during the adjudication. The completion of this project is awaited with interest as it will provide a very significant and attractive amenity for residents when completed. Strangely, this project was observed during the adjudication, but it has not been referred to under this category in the application form. This is considered to be a very important riverside habitat and it is strongly recommended that it is included in your action plan. The provision of additional trees at the Glen will also make a positive contribution to biodiversity as well as provide some variation in the habitat. It is noted that a Secret Meadow has been established at Marion Park. The Committee (and the RAPID Action Group) are to be commended on this piece of work. This type of project is to be encouraged as it gives the community who have been involved a sense of ownership and this helps to ensure the long term sustainability of the project. It is further recommended that the Committee should explore the development of a 'Sli na Slainte', that could incorporate the Boyne River valley walk and possibly proceed downstream beyond the Port.

Litter Control:

A good standard of litter control is being achieved in Drogheda. The adjudicator has no doubts that this is the result of the hard work of the wardens (with their blitz every 3 months!) and the Committee and volunteers who participate in the National Spring Clean Initiative. The actions with respect to enforcement are noted and it is hoped that they will have the desired effect. Some blackspots persist however. At the time of adjudication, litter was observed at the bottle bank at the Trinity Street car park and also in the litter trap immediately adjacent to Donaghys Mill. A number of the steps in the town also suffered from litter including the steps behind the monument at the bridge and also the steps at the viaduct.

Waste Minimisation:

This is an area that is becoming increasingly important in the tidy towns competition. The efforts of the Committee to date are to be commended with perhaps the most important action to date being the number of bring banks around the town as the availability of these facilities is a key component in the waste minimisation strategy. The use of Mulch in composting projects is also to be commended. However, it is suggested that other actions could be undertaken such as segregating the waste following litter patrols and the national spring clean initiative, running awareness campaigns to encourage the residents of Drogheda to minimise waste and to investigate the provision of composters to individual houses. Finally, the Committee should also consider providing composting seminar and workgroups to residents groups who wish to set up a composting area to generate compost for their landscaping projects. The adjudicator is also of the view that these additional actions should be considered for inclusion in your action plan. These and similar actions should help to significantly improve your performance in this category in future years.

Tidiness:

Generally speaking, a relatively good standard of tidiness is been achieved in Drogheda. Much work appears to be been done as part of the urban renewal projects and in the ongoing development of the town to reduce clutter in the town centre. In general, signage was in reasonable condition and the majority of areas appeared to be well maintained with weed growth on pavements and road sides kept to a minimum. There did not appear to be particular problem with unused poles. The work of the Council with respect to graffiti is noted, but the problem was observed in a very small number of areas. Some graffiti was noted on Trinity Street and in Marion Park (particularly on the wall dividing the industrial area from the housing). Sub stations in many residential areas were also defaced with graffiti.

Residential Areas:

The adjudicator was pleased to note that the number of high quality residential areas in Drogheda. Although, they are too numerous to note, the standard of landscaping and maintenance of green areas and individual dwelling was high. Keep up the good work. However, it is suggested to the Committee (and Borough Council) that in incidences where residential development has been permitted and open spaces are not overlooked, it leads to particular problems with maintenance and tidiness. A number of examples were observed in Drogheda, with perhaps the most striking being Ashfield off Trinity Street where the estate was in good condition, but the unsupervised entrance was not.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

In general, the approach roads to Drogheda are now in particularly good condition, especially to the north side of the town and to the south west of the town. In most cases, the road surfacing is of a high standard and the investment in new footpaths and paving is evident. At the time of adjudication, work was underway on West Street and we look forward to its completion for 2008. The project proposed for the various steps is noted with interest and in the view of the adjudicator, this would be very worthwhile. These steps add tremendous character to the town and help to encourage walking and it is hoped that they could be refurbished, maintained and lighting provided where needed.

General Impression:

Drogheda continues to take big strides in this competition and the adjudicator is confident that the hard work will continue and the Committee will continue to progress in future years.

Second Round Adjudication:

Drogheda looked exceptionally well on the day of second adjudication . The new development along West Street outside of St. Peter's Church was particularly admired, however the shutters to the roadside of the Drogheda Town Centre and the premises beside Eason's looked particularly ugly and did nothing to complement the wonderful new civic space. The use of solid shutters without internal lighting on business premises has a deadening effect on the streetscape, however when these suffer from graffiti also it brings down the tone of the town. This was the case with many shutters along West Street. Shop fronts which were admired for their overall presentation and their lack of security shutters included Black Tie, Henry Jermyn's and Wogan Interior Furniture and Carpets together with Flower's by Susan.

A lot of older buildings looked quite shabby to their upper storeys; hopefully this problem will be addressed. Your many new developments were admired including the Scotch Hall Centre and the Haymarket. The St. Lawrence Town Centre is most attractive. Older impressive buildings looked well too however some are in need of attention such as the Centre for Continuing Education together with its steps and railings. The Moorehead Café is beautifully presented and has been nominated by the adjudicator for a Shopfront Award. Singleton Town House Hotel was also admired.

Your many landscaped areas were beautifully presented and the colour of the flower display at John Paul Court was quite stunning. Recently planted trees have been noted; hopefully these will mature to provide a legacy for future generations. Flower displays throughout the town both in containers and created flowerbeds add wonderful colour to their surroundings.

The standard of litter control has increased in Drogheda since the last visit by this adjudicator and was quite strong on the day of second adjudication, there was a light scattering of litter throughout but none of which was very serious. Perhaps the weakest litter point was outside of St. Augustine's Church. The litter bin in the Bring Centre located across from the Abbey Car Park was overflowing. The Bring Centre located across from the Centre for Continuing Education was spoiled by litter, broken glass and some empty boxes and the containers here looked quite scruffy. new granite seating and bollards in West Street were admired; hopefully the wirescape will be ducted in the entire town centre soon.