

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Dundalk** Ref: **494**
County: **Louth** Mark: **278**
Category: **H** Date(s): **03/07/2007**
05/08/2007

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	37
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	24
Litter Control	50	32
Waste Minimisation	20	15
Tidiness	30	16
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	278

Overall Development Approach:

The performance of Dundalk in the tidy towns competition in recent years has been very impressive. 2007 is no exception and this is reflected in the increase in marks that have been observed. This strong performance would appear to be due to a number of factors including the enthusiasm and commitment of the 14 member committee and the contacts that have been established with Louth County Council and other agencies such as LEADER. The Committee are to be commended on securing the involvement of traders associations as their input is normally very valuable. It is noted that residents associations are also involved in the tidy towns effort and this is particularly important in a town the size of Dundalk. It is interesting to note that the Committee are trying to set up a web site to convey the tidy towns message – this is especially impressive as involving all members of the wider community is a key objective of the competition. The Committee are also to be commended on securing the participation of schoolchildren in Dundalk in Tidy Town Activities such as the National Spring Clean. The idea of a cross border school twinning scheme is also noted with interest and we look forward to an update on this initiative in 2008. It is noted an action plan is being prepared at present and when this is completed, it is highly likely that further progress will be made and additional marks will be secured. The Committee are also to be congratulated on the first rate application form submitted to the competition. This comprehensive documentation and information was very helpful during adjudication. The map and the suggested route were an excellent aid to adjudication, although it is recommended that the Marshes is clearly labelled on the map in 2008!

The Built Environment:

The built environment of Dundalk has changed significantly in recent years. The vast majority of these changes have been very positive and the result is an interesting mix of very impressive period buildings in the vicinity of the town centre interspersed with high quality, modern structures that have been added over the last 5 – 10 years. Without a doubt, the central area that accommodates tremendous old buildings such as the

Courthouse, the Town Hall and the Post Office is a highlight and these buildings are tremendous assets to the town. There are also the fantastic streets that are lined with very attractive red brick structures like Ard Easmuinn and Castle Road – although some of the buildings on Castle Road require some attention. Individual buildings like the Dundalk Brewery Building and St Nicholas' Church are also very impressive, while structures like the Franciscan tower and Realt Na Mara are tremendous national monuments. The Marshes provides some modern architecture (albeit in a pastiche style in some instances) while on the outskirts, there are many high quality modern buildings to be found with the new Crown Plaza Hotel being the most striking. This is complemented by impressive new industrial buildings like Heinz and the Ice Dome on the Relief Road. Dereliction continues to be a slight problem with a number of derelict sites dotted around the town (such as around the railway station) and it is noted that Committee are now taking action by writing to Iarnród Éireann. It is recommended that a strategy for dealing with derelict sites is agreed with Louth County Council and included in the action plan.

Landscaping:

The hard work of the Committee is evident in the landscaping projects that were to be seen on the day of adjudication. The landscaping in the central area around the Courthouse and Town Hall was very impressive. Planting and mature trees were also observed at the gorgeous open space opposite the medical eye and health centre. The planting around the monument at the top of Francis Street is also very effective and makes a very positive contribution to visual amenity. High quality and colourful planting was also observed at the junction of Dublin Street and Ardee Road and at the junction of the Ardee and the Carrickmacross Road. The Committee are to be commended on their attention to landscaping outside of the town centre. Attractive planting was observed on Tom Bellew Avenue as well as around the Church of the Holy Redeemer. Impressive landscaping schemes and mature trees were also observed in Father Murray Park. The landscaping schemes used in the industrial areas on the outskirts of the town and close to DKIT were also impressive. Although, this planting lacked colour and some variety, it seems to be very effective for landscaping large extensive sites such as industrial estates and campuses. The trees planted in the Muirhevnamoor Community Park were also observed.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Dundalk enjoys some fantastic amenities and parks. The most impressive of these would appear to be Hill Park which provides a fantastic amenity for local people in terms of the facilities available (such as training areas and playgrounds) as well as being a fantastic habitat for a diverse range of plants, animals and birds. No information boards were noted during adjudication, and if none are provided, it is suggested this option should be explored, preferably with the involvement of the local schoolchildren. The initiative to provide an additional 800 trees in Muirhevnamoor Community Park is an excellent one as these trees will form a very important habitat in this location. Perhaps the provision of a nature walk could also be explored to take full advantage of this initiative – again with the involvement of local schoolchildren. Finally, the foreshore area and the Navy Bank walkway are both excellent amenities that provide an entirely different habitat. Once again, it is recommended that information boards are considered as well as appropriate directional signage. The proposals for the ramparts and Blackwater river are also noted with interest and we look forward to seeing them progress in 2008.

Litter Control:

A very high standard of litter control is being achieved in Dundalk. On the day of adjudication, there were only very small amounts of litter to be observed and this was very impressive for a town the size of Dundalk. This is clearly the result of the 50 clean ups organised by the Committee and the installation of the new litter bins. This strong performance is reflected in the high mark achieved. Well done! However, litter was observed a small number of black spots in the town, which included a site on the side of the road directly opposite Bellew Park and to the rear of the Emo Patrol Station at Dundalk shopping centre.

Waste Minimisation:

This area is becoming increasingly important in the tidy towns competition. The efforts of the Committee to date are to be commended as the performance of the Civic Amenity site is staggering. It is also positive to note that bring centre is to be provided at the Marshes Centre in 2008. The Committee is encouraged to explore additional actions that would help to minimise waste. They include identifying potential sites for bottle banks, segregating and recycling the waste collected at the National Spring Clean and litter patrols, running awareness campaigns of reducing, reusing and recycling at a local level and investigating the provision of composters to individual houses. The Committee is also encouraged to provide a composting area so that the resulting compost can then be used in their ongoing landscaping projects. Actions such as these will significantly improve your performance in this category in future years.

Tidiness:

In general, it is considered that a high standard of tidiness has been achieved in Dundalk. The ongoing work of the Committee with respect to having cables put underground is acknowledged in this regard. Some improvements are possible. Graffiti was noted in a very small number of locations in the town such as to the rear of Dunnes Stores, on the wall adjoining the inner relief road between The Centenary Business Park and Tom Bellew Avenue and in the vicinity of Muirhevnamoor Community Park. The adjudicator also notes the initiative to co-ordinate all welcome signage and recommends that the issue of shutters in the town centre is addressed with the cooperation of the County Council in the action plan.

Residential Areas:

There are a number of very high quality residential areas in Dundalk that are too numerous to mention in this report. Of particular note, were Ashbrook and the more established areas in Ard Easuinn and Castle Street were very attractive. The area in the vicinity of the Franciscan tower was also of a high standard. Many of the new modern estates such as Green acres, the Belfry and further on Greensfield Court and Woodbury Gardens were also observed. A number of steadily improving estates were also observed in the vicinity of Muirhevnamoor Community Park.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

In general, the approach roads to Dundalk are very good, especially to the south side of the town in the vicinity of DKIT and the industrial areas. The extensive investment in the roads infrastructure is notable with high quality road surfacing and markings in the majority of cases.

General Impression:

Dundalk continues to improve in leaps and bounds and this is clearly due to the hard work and organisation of the Committee

Second Round Adjudication:

Dundalk looked well on the day of second adjudication . The adjudicator was particularly impressed with your Improve Our Town Award and the associated banners with the pictures of beautiful shop fronts, this is a most creative initiative and one that will bring lasting results, well done.

The development of incidental civic spaces is a nice touch and the one to the roadside of the new gated village development was noted and admired. The Remnant Basket shop front is particularly attractive and the lack of shutters here to its windows in favour of attractive security grills was noted, these premises have been nominated by the adjudicator for a Shop Front Award. Business premises should be encouraged not to use solid shutters for security after business hours but to replace these with a see through type of shutter if these are thought to be necessary together with internal lighting which will have a very positive effect on the streetscape and of course is good for business as it encourages window shopping. Mc Geough's Pub has also been nominated for the shop front award. The upper storeys of Ju Bago and the adjacent Whispers Club look quite scruffy which is a pity as it overlooks your beautiful Market Square and it is located at an important junction of Market Square and Earl Street. Two nearby gates are also shabby in appearance and look quite incongruous in the lovely setting of the Market Square. One of these is located beside The Works (a barber shop).

Landscaping was admired throughout the town and your many flower displays were noted. The grounds of the Dundalk Institute of Technology were especially admired and of course pride of place must go to your Market Square. The garden of the Christian Brother premises on Chapel Street was also admired. The grass margins on the southern entrance were a little overgrown however not excessively so and given the amount of rain in the weeks preceding second adjudication this is probably to be expected. Your coastal walk is a wonderful amenity, perhaps finger post signage might be provided together with an interpretative panel. Belleview Park sports grounds looks attractive and the children's playground here was noted. The small church and graveyard on St. Nicolas's Road was neatly presented.

Litter control was quite good around the town; some was noted in Church Street and more along the Coast Road. Some takeaway litter was noted at Seatown.

An undeveloped site presented a problem of untidiness on the entrance from the southern approach road together with derelict buildings in Yorke Street, however you are aware of these problems and no doubt they will be addressed in due course. Do try to keep oversized advertisement hoardings to a minimum or preferably out of the town altogether.

St. Mary's Road which is a particularly attractive Victorian street was noted for its overhead service cables running parallel to buildings rather than criss crossing the road which is excellent as an interim measure whilst awaiting ducting. Road and footpath surfaces throughout were quite good and cycle lanes were noted also.

Both Dublin Street and Francis Street were wirescape free together with Clanbrassil Street. Street furniture was neatly presented and your street nameplates throughout the town were particularly admired. Hopefully Church Street will have its wirescape ducted in the not too distant future and the number of plastic signs replaced with more appropriate ones. The silver birch trees along Earl Street give this area an elegant appearance.