

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Birr** Ref: **549**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **228**
Category: **E** Date(s): **27/06/2007**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	31
The Built Environment	50	35
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	4
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	26
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	28
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	228

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the completed entry form and map of Birr. Birr is a large town which is undergoing quite a lot of improvement works. It is noted the committee has links with the Chamber of Commerce, and the Birr Town Council. Are there leader groups, partnership or development groups, or other agencies such as Foroige, GAA, that would lend further support to the tidy town efforts? In a town the size of Birr, the partnership approach is necessary to tackle the scale of the work involved. Are there residents associations for most areas? Other towns have run their own tidy areas competition with great success. Birr has potential to keep on improving, with some good planning, leadership and support from the community. Best wishes to all.

The Built Environment:

Birr town square is very smart and there are some lovely buildings here. The old fashioned lanterns and planters are charming. Dooleys hotel has some work going on, and it is a distinctive business in the town. I look forward to seeing it, as I'm sure so do the residents, unveiled from behind its scaffolding. The new lighting in st johns mall. And new litter bins put up in various areas are noted. O Connell st has been transformed with its new paving, and cables put underground.

Some lovely shopfronts. The jewellers has been recently painted and would give a mention to Peterfox pharmacy and opticians beside it. Guinans sports very clean- no litter, Hedgerows is nice. Corner railing at the maltings has been knocked and bent out of shape and is a litter trap – that needs some attention. The maltings building very beautiful, lovely residential development, brightly painted, old heritage features all kept, down to waterside is lovely
Spinners bistro looks very inviting

Kellys pub looks adorable with the bikes outside. There are some big corrugated iron shed at end of road Very impressive entrance to library, and the public buildings in a church. There are beautiful modern glass doors on the old building. Overall there is a mix of buildings in Birr. So many are fresh and well kept while some look unused and a bit worse for wear. The town centre for the main part is good on the whole, and the new streetscape is impressive

Landscaping:

Riverside bank is wonderful nice park with benches. The weir makes for a very pleasant experience. Unfortunately quite a bit of litter around and the ring buoy has been taken out of its holder but thrown into weir and caught on a stick and can see it in there.

There are many lovely hanging baskets and window boxes throughout the town

Plans to plant whitethorn are noted. This is a good native tree for supporting wildlife

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Last years report gave a run down of the various habitats in your area and suggested you engage expertise for doing a survey and develop nature panels and amenities around the wildlife in the area. Please refer to this note again for suggestions.

Litter Control:

There is some litter here and there, mostly cigarette litter and some takeaway material. Sidestreets are mostly clean and free of graffiti, nicely paved and neat. major

Unfortunately there is some dumping – bags and boxes – at the recycling banks. Its a pity its littered – so close to the castle. As this is a recurring problem, have the local litter wardens been engaged to assist in how this might be tackled? Otherwise the car park is very well presented with trees and railings.

Quite a bit of litter floating about the square but it is recent stuff and it is at the end of the day so perhaps it won't be long until there is a sweep

Waste Minimisation:

There is nothing in the entry form for this section and there is scope to gain many points here. Liaise with the County Environmental Awareness Officer, engage with schools - are they in the Green Schools programme? Promote waste reduction, reuse and recycling to the community. This may be a special area of local expertise and a way to have new people join in. Refer to the Race Against Waste guide that accompanied the application pack

Tidiness:

Love the old petrol pumps outside muphys painted red and yellow. A lot of the time these can be quite ugly in places when disused but painted brightly makes them into a quirky feature and works well here

Lot of road markings around castle worn away need to be repainted. Close to marian hall. Loads of cigarette related litter outside marian hall. Have 2 ciggy bins outside and still loads of butts on the ground which is unfortunate. Can the awareness be stepped up with posters inside the doors?

Although a refurbishment of the town centre has taken place, there are still noticeable areas close by where the pavement is broken and kerbing cracked, and surface come away to expose cobbles underneath. Are there further plans for resurfacing works? The partners need to work together and identify priority areas for spending

Johns mall railings all beautifully painted. New play area is wonderful – well done.

Residential Areas:

Residential areas are not too bad. Cornmarket St and Moorpark st were clean. There are some new residential areas which are neat and clean. Birr has some lovely rows of terraced cottages and grander buildings which give it character. Work with developers to ensure new developments are properly finished and landscaped. Consider a town competition for residential areas, sponsored by local businesses perhaps with prizes to encourage localised improvements in upkeep and maintenance.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Approach to birr from railway rd side fine. There are some lovely trees. Could be tidier but welcome to birr sign is nice. Very clean and clear and sharp all along by Oliver Douglas and sons, this way in. Midland oil fences could be improved as could the larson garage signs. The cash and carry has some nice flowers. The roads in town centre need to be remarked as they are faded and this is a popular tourist route, whereas its confusing how to turn at the town square.

Approach from tullamore, some fine buildings on that road and the pubfront fighting cocks is remarkable, but what takes away from this approach is the overhead wires – the usual criss cross haphazard across the street and wondering if its in the plans to put these underground like has been done on o'connell st so successfully. Good traffic calming measures on this approach.

General Impression:

Birr is a town with lots of potential and there have been some improvements but there seems to be a lack of progress on engaging with other groups to develop a plan for progress. There seems to be a lack of new recruits to the Tidy Towns effort which every town faces from time to time. Renew your efforts, get creative about more new projects, celebrate successes like the play area and renew your plans. Success breeds success and more supporters will come on board. Best wishes to all.