

Tidy Towns Competition 2007

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Clonmel** Ref: **516**
County: **Tipperary (South)** Mark: **270**
Category: **G** Date(s): **13/07/2007**
08/07/2007

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	36
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	19
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	31
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	270

Overall Development Approach:

Welcome to the 2007 National Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for your submission, including an excellent detailed programme for the year, which the adjudicator found of great assistance. Clonmel is an ancient and formally walled town on the banks of the River Siur, which flows along the borders of County Waterford immediately to the South. Beyond the river to the South rise the Comeragh mountains and to the west the Knockmealdown. Clonmel is developing rapidly and the committee are to be commended for their efforts to engage with other agencies, both statutory and otherwise, to meet the growing needs of this expanding community. The St Francis Court Development is again being considered for the Sustainable Development Award.

The Built Environment:

Clonmel still preserves its West Gate, and repointing work on this has been carried out in recent years. The town also retains a portion of its walls and square towers. The Main Guard has been beautifully restored and this building has been nominated for the Promotion of Heritage Award. The town core itself has a fine stock of largely three storey buildings, and many of these still retain their traditional form. Ground floors in particular retain their original shop fronts in many cases, however, overhead, it was noted, that few retain the original sash windows. We would encourage the committee to carry out a survey of some of the fine remaining architectural features of the past with a view to their preservation. The pedestrianisation of areas of the town core has worked very well and has added to the attractive shopping ambience of this area. The ongoing high quality conservation work at the Silver Springs House and its associated outbuildings was noted and we look forward to seeing this substantial renovation completed. St Mary's Church of Ireland, which houses the Tourist Information Centre, and its magnificent grounds with its proliferation of Yew Trees, together with part of the old town wall was admired. Beyond, the majestic Anne St, still retaining the majority of its sash windows and ornate and colourful doorways, looked impressive, as did the many colourful flower displays

here. The Flood Alleviation works, when completed, will allow for new developments in the attractive riverside area that could, in the future, hugely enhance this area of town.

Landscaping:

Maintenance work at the Richard Mulcahy Park and Arboretum was ongoing on the day of adjudication. Well done on the enhancement work at the playground here, which was being fully utilised by St Peter and Paul's National School on the day. The standard of screening and planting, at the car park of Mulcahy Park, was particularly high and certainly achieved its aim in softening the hard surfacing and reducing the visual impact of a large parking area. The public convenience was presented to a high standard. The Toberheena Park is a nice addition and a good amenity in this location. An enhanced entrance, with the development of entrance gates, would give it greater status. The ongoing widespread planting programme, within the town proper and its many parks, is beginning to have a major favourable impact on the greening of Clonmel as it matures. The committee is to be congratulated on the programme of work carried out throughout these parks in co-operation with the Local Authority. It is to be hoped that you will be successful in having further bi-lingual signage installed in the park areas. Reference has already been made to the hard landscaping surfaces of the pedestrian areas of the town; perhaps a similar hard landscaping surface finish could be extended to the Mick Delahunty Square which houses an impressive array of buildings, including County Council Offices, Library, Swimming Pool, and Band Hall. The Square has already the attractive Frank Patterson sculpture centre piece but its setting is somewhat diminished by the clutter of cars in this area. An approach to the soft landscaping to reduce the visual impact of cars, similar to the Richard Mulcahy Park, and an extension of the paved surface in the existing pedestrian areas, would hugely enhance this important square. The Allen, Larkin, O'Brien monument at New Quay with its high quality hard and soft landscaping areas, attractive street furniture and colourful flower displays, was particularly admired.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Wilderness Gorge is a great amenity for the growing town of Clonmel and well done to the committee for their initiative in preserving this area for future generations. The efforts of the schools and Birdwatch Ireland in making the town more wildlife friendly, through their bird boxes initiative, is commendable.

Litter Control:

Litter control on the day of adjudication was generally very good, given the size of the town and its busy commercial life. There was some litter close by the plant bed to the rear of the AIB Bank in the O'Connell St car park. The car park off Kickham St had some litter on the day and some discarded bags of recycling material at the Bring Centre. A number of the attractive pedestrian lanes throughout the town were also in need of litter control. The main streets of the town were litter free and well presented. The many initiatives that the committee are engaged in with the Local Authority, the schools and the business community have been noted and it is hoped that this campaign will continue to be successful.

Waste Minimisation:

It is noted from the figures submitted that the tonnage of recyclable materials continues to rise. These are encouraging statistics and augur well for the future. The initiatives such as the reusable nappies, charity shops and the recyclables collected by the Local Authority every fortnight, continue to raise awareness of waste minimisation issues. This is already evidenced by the large number of composting bins purchased by the householders of Clonmel. The Bring Centres were generally neat and tidy, and the one at Lady Blessington Bath and its surrounding landscaped area was particularly admired.

Tidiness:

In a large town like Clonmel, the necessity of encouraging the whole community to take part in keeping areas tidy is obvious. We acknowledge the efforts of the committee in this regard, particularly the campaign to remove fly posting and graffiti, together with your involvement in An Taisce Spring Clean, and also the "Appreciate your Help" cards printed by the committee. A number of constructions were noted to be ongoing and in the inner town, the overall appearance of tidiness was good. It was noted that in the Powerstown area, large construction works and ancillary road and site works remain to be completed.

Residential Areas:

Residential properties are presented to a high standard in general, ranging from the beautiful detached dwellings with mature gardens at Aylesbury Court and Mountain View, to the beautifully presented colourful two storey dwellings at Irishtown. A number of housing schemes throughout the town were presented to a very high standard, such as Tivoli Terrace and Connolly Park. Comeragh Drive is an appealing development which is well maintained and retained some of the original architectural artefacts of the location. Springfield was also admired. One of the features of Clonmel was the many fine housing estates and street houses, too numerous to mention. The initiatives of the Rapid Programme and the Borough Council are to be

commended. The results of their efforts are very much in evidence in the many residential areas being well cared for. Residents can be proud of the contribution they are making both as individuals and in association with their neighbours.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The town has many fine linkage laneways and a number connecting O'Connell St to Old Bridge have attractive vistas out to the Comeragh mountains. Your plans to continue with laneway paving throughout the town is noted. The approaches to Clonmel are generally of a good standard, the Cahir approach being the highlight, with its stone walls, wide grass margins, strands of mature trees and panoramic views of the mountains in the background. Construction is ongoing at the Cahir Road roundabout and, as previously stated, some areas of the bypass, particularly in the vicinity of the Waterford approach road, have yet to be completed and landscaped.

General Impression:

Clonmel is a large town that continues to expand and develop. Many of the new constructions are to a high standard. The committee is to be commended in helping to ensure that this development is carried out in a controlled and attractive manner.

Second Round Adjudication:

Not having been in Clonmel for half-a-dozen years the sense of progress over the intervening period was immediately seen. The vibrancy and bustle of the town centre, to a background of beautifully restored and renovated buildings and innovative new ones, was remarkable. Many fine old terraces and smaller runs of cottages remain, giving a sense of care and respect for what has been inherited from comparatively recent past. It was particularly good to see several modern buildings taking their inspiration from the traditional warehouses and mills in terms of scale and profile, and also because new residential properties revitalise the town centre and do not disperse the population to remote estates. It was good to see a sympathetic attitude being taken to the neighbourhoods noted under 'Rapid' in your documentation, though unfortunately there was an unacceptable amount of disposable litter on green spaces - a higher mark under Litter Control would otherwise have been given; grass areas were quite unkempt and the ending of one cul-de-sac was very scruffy indeed. Perhaps too great a dependence on outside help has resulted in this; 'self help' is a wise old adage. It was very good to see that work had already started on the rehabilitation of Silversprings, the most distinguished mansion in the neighbourhood of the town; this adjudicator had drawn attention to its deteriorating state a decade ago. Considerably more marks could have been gained under Tidiness if gable-ends of many terraces, small and large, had been painted to the same high standard as the frontages of the same houses; and in most of the central streets the accumulation of mass-produced signs and advertisements gives an untidy look when the whole street is observed from either end - many of the individual premises are very well presented, it is the overall effect that is sometimes less than prepossessing. In some town-centre streets there are still ugly poles and overhead wires: their removal would have an enormously beneficial effect. All this takes time, of course. The Heritage Trail was followed, graphically reminding the visitor of Clonmel's cultural deposit over a very long time indeed. The Tourist Office in the lovely St Marys' Churchyard must be the most visitor-unfriendly in the country: double yellow lines in the street outside and a fierce notice stating 'No unauthorised entry!' at the gate - what the effect must be on the law-abiding Netherlander or the timid first-time visitor from Antrim must be one can only guess. The churchyard itself is beautifully kept, with fine ancient yews and superb tomb sculpture going back several centuries. The new - to this adjudicator - business park at Gort-na-Fleur was admired for its well designed buildings and the surrounding planting. Congratulations to those who successfully opposed the invasive development of the Wilderness Gorge.