

# Tidy Towns Competition 2007

## *Adjudication Report*

Centre: **Aughrim** Ref: **257**  
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **299**  
Category: **C** Date(s): **28/06/2007**  
**10/08/2007**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2007
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	39
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	28
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	9
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>299</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Four precepts were given at the outset of your Three Year Plan: to improve the quality of life for the residents of Aughrim and visitors to the town; to maintain the heritage and character of the town for future generations; to create a team spirit and a sense of pride within the community of the town; and to improve the position of the town in the Tidy Towns Competition. In the view of this adjudicator, nowhere have such precepts been so succinctly articulated; and, in the same view, the importance of these precepts is in descending order - thus, the most important objective is to improve the quality of life. This you appear to have done to a remarkable degree. It is worth observing that additional marks are very hard to come by in the top layer of the competition, in spite of the additional effort which has gone into the work.

### **The Built Environment:**

The use of dressed and random granite is still prevalent, from boundaries to new housing. Several developers must be congratulated for selecting local materials and for reintroducing local motifs, such as brick facings. The two granite churches were, as always, well presented. Last year's second adjudicator expressed mild doubts about the bulk of the emerging Market Square House, but as it turns out its scale is not at all overpowering and its predominantly neo-classical appearance blends well with neighbouring civic and business premises. (The absence of chimney stacks struck one as odd - illogically so in the 21st century!) Of the shops, all are well kept - the traditional Barber's Shop, the distinctively modern Stonecutter's restaurant, the smart external woodwork of Byrne's Supermarket and the cool style of The Gallery were particularly admired. The domed and pillared bandstand with its superb paving is a splendid addition to the recreational area, an admirable point of focus. The new pavillion nearby reaches almost the same degree of visual success. Large commercial premises on the outskirts of the town are well screened - especially notable is the dense cypress hedge at one of these on the Arklow road.

### **Landscaping:**

There is no doubt when one is approaching Aughrim from a number of directions that one is about to come across something special - this is because of the attention that has been paid to the neat cleaning and cutting of verges and hedgerows, and then the opening-out onto substantial grassed spaces with judicious tree and shrub planting. The picnic area at Tinakilly Bridge is the prime example of this, with its succession of gentle weirs that look so well and also make paddling safe for children. The smooth new bowling green is a wonderful new leisure resource. Landscaping of the Market Square is effective. The hundred-yard-long rose bed on the Rednagh road must clearly be the result of much painstaking and continuing work. Young plane trees are also a satisfying new feature of the same road, and the picturesque bridge at its west end has been greatly enhanced by removal of waterside undergrowth and by simple planting. Floral adornments in spaces here and there add touches of colour and interest in imaginative execution that goes far beyond the now ubiquitous hanging baskets and window boxes - though there are good examples of these too.

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Aquatic birds greeted this adjudicator when visiting the extensive waterside amenity, which was seen to be very much in use by anglers and walkers on the day of the visit. It was good to see wheel-chair friendly access and to read that the National Disabled Angling Facility was responsible for surfacing the paths. The Sean Lenehan walk is well marked and maintained in an appropriately rural fashion. Everywhere one is conscious of the abundance of the natural resources that are a feature of Wicklow - here especially of the native and planted woodlands and the watercourses.

### **Litter Control:**

There was very little disposable litter in Aughrim on the first adjudication day. Congratulations to the volunteers and the FAS workers, and also to the sweeper who, your notes explain, is employed once a week.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

The innovative idea of the Tidy Towns Thrift Shop, with the objective of reusing unwanted household goods, was admired. It was also useful to learn that the committee bought a commercial mower and shredder for green waste. Initiative of this kind are precisely what is needed in this increasingly important category. The well sited bring-bank was favourably noted.

### **Tidiness:**

The closed filling-station on the Arklow road was decently screened. A 'zoned residential site' below Millwood, though not unduly untidy, came as a surprise in the context of the overall tidiness of the town, as did the non-removal of a small amount of builders' debris in the former Back Alley. Developers of new housing estates were seen to be taking measures to keep their building sites and approaches as clean as possible.

### **Residential Areas:**

In Ardee Row (1893) the well-kept cottages were admired for their genuine old-style (what else but?) 'cottage gardens'. Lourdes Crescent is another enclave presented as a cosy unit taking its cue from the older residential tradition, bordered here by mountain ash and wall-top annuals, its lych-gate favourably attracting the eye. The entire length of Our Lady's Drive opposite was also harmoniously planted. Quaint well-loved homes were seen in Nursey Way, and two (fairly recent?) granite cottages with brick facings opposite the RC Church are very much in the local tradition. River Court is made up of smart new homes in a section of the village that used to be quite dishevelled. Housing on the hill towards Macreddin was seen to be variable, culminating in the splendid 'Heather Glen' with its background of mature beeches and stone walls with flowers cascading over them. Some of the new suburban type houses here are promising if conventional. Of the new estates, Derry Bawn is distinguished by its copper beech hedging, which must be unique. From a design point of view, the un-named new council estate seems much more interesting - it will be mentioned next year when trees and planting have a chance to make their mark; other developments in course of construction will also be commented upon next year.

### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

Road surfaces and paving throughout Aughrim are of high standard - back streets that used to be rough in places are now well surfaced. Absence of almost all overhead wires, and the provision of well designed lighting, throughout the village, helps to create an enviable streetscape. All official signposts are well-positioned, readable and clean. The contribution of the County Council in these matters must be warmly acknowledged. Especially remarkable is the elegant camber of the Rathdrum road where it curves over the bridge, enhanced by the neat landscaping on either side.

### **General Impression:**

It has been a genuine pleasure to re-visit Aughrim after a space of some years, and to note the immense improvements in all quarters. What is richly apparent is that every householder, as well as the proprietors of every business, play their part in maintaining and enhancing their premises or plots of land. Financial assistance, and assistance in kind, from businesses and the official bodies, combine with the work of this far-sighted committee to emphasize the precepts quoted at the top of this report. Congratulations on a first-class entry.

### **Second Round Adjudication:**

One of the most enjoyable aspects of Tidy Towns adjudication is the fact that the adjudicator gets the opportunity to visit some really beautiful towns and villages. Aughrim is one of those villages and indeed the overall presentation was found to be most impressive on the day of second adjudication. For this adjudicator there are two key issues in regard to Aughrim. The first is that there seems to be a great sense of community here and this has obviously heavily influenced your most positive approach to Tidy Towns. The second point is that you have addressed all aspects of the competition. You have not selected just a few adjudication categories for major attention but have worked diligently on all adjudication categories in the competition. Aughrim stands out in Tidy Towns terms for many reasons but for the second round adjudicator the excellence of the landscaping examined here is a major highlight. The landscaped area by the fine stone Rednagh Bridge on the Tinahealy road and the area below the bridge in the centre of the village were both superbly presented. However the highlight for this adjudicator was the presentation of the Park, angling and bowling areas. The presentation standard that has been achieved here is outstanding and is among the best that this adjudicator has seen in the past few years anywhere in Ireland. Other smaller landscaped areas also caught the eye and this included the beautiful Rose beds and the colourful area by the 1798 Memorial where hard and soft landscaping work so well together. Throughout Aughrim there is a great sense of colour not alone in landscaping terms but in the built environment also. Many property owners have used excellent colour schemes complimented where necessary by hanging baskets, flower tubs or window boxes. Some excellent retail signage was also observed and this included the fine lettering on the O'Toole premises. The housing estates in Aughrim continue the colourful landscaping theme and St. Martin's Drive is just one estate that stands out for this reason. Road signs appeared to have been freshly painted or recently replaced – they were clean, clear and distinctive and this is what the visitor really needs. However the adjudicator was a little disappointed with the level of litter control experienced on the day of the second adjudication. Litter was noted along the small closed laneway beside the beautiful Granite Church of Ireland Church. Again litter was noted below the wall on the right hand side of the road following the right turn to Aughrim off the Arklow road; along Lower Street some litter was also evident. However the litter issue highlighted here does not detract in any serious way from the overall extremely high standard of presentation that is the beautiful village of Aughrim.