

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Loughrea** Ref: **993**
County: **Galway** Mark: **230**
Category: **D** Date(s): **05/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	28
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	27
Litter Control	50	31
Waste Minimisation	20	6
Tidiness	30	12
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	27
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	230

Overall Development Approach:

Loughrea is most warmly welcomed back to the TidyTowns community and thank you for your comprehensively completed entry form. Thank you also for the map enclosed which was very useful on the day of adjudication. You have projected the deep seated history of your town with considerable panache. We liked particularly the series of historic plaques as on the Courthouse, Fairgreen, the last surviving town gate and elsewhere. The Main Street features many fine new buildings but is not without a number of reminders of its former somewhat tired appearance. Many premises require painting. The newly completed infill buildings from Aras na Cloiche Credit Union to Kids about town is a significant and welcome upgrade. Paul Byron Shoes is also a welcome new addition to the streetscape. In all such development it is important that the road surface be extended so it joins with the new pavement. Alternatively, disfiguring weeds and general untidiness is sure to result.

The fine new County Council offices, offering ramp access is applauded. In general your car parks are very well presented, both the long and short stay. They have retained a stone faced frontage. The presentation of the lake and the opportunities to view it along the frontage are very well presented. The treatment of the area embracing the town gate and St. Brendan's Cathedral, Diocesan Museum and other elements of that complex was suitably displayed. The traditional building housing the Garda Station projected a fine sense of a 19th century solid building. The traditions are also very well represented in the presentation of the long wall of the former barracks with its creeper embellishment, while the Carmelite's long tradition in the town (1300 – 1897) is delightfully well presented in the Friary grounds.

The Built Environment:

The imposing Courthouse in its Fairgreen setting, overlooking the lake helped to set the standard for others. The AIB, post office and An Teach Beg all caught the eye. The Town Council's well presented building and

News 'n Choose was bright. The imposing bulk of the Mercy Convent and School (1930) was neat and orderly as was St. Brendan's Vocational School, the grounds of which were particularly well presented.

St. Brendan's National School, Mount Pleasant has planning permission for a further extension and currently featured a fine mural in the shelter. There were some weeds outside the walls. Michael Regan's premises in Main Street in its vibrant blue and yellow colours was very eye catching as was the high level mural at Kathleen's Kitchen.

It is pleasant that the splendid gates leading to Mount Pleasant have been retained as well as the fine entrance to St. Joseph's Monastery where there is work in progress. Beatty's knitwear gift and furniture store in green was appealing while the Bank of Ireland was somewhat dull in appearance. McNamee's caught the eye while St. Brendan's Home (1842) and the Old Rectory were well presented.

Landscaping:

Landscape techniques have been used to good effect to present both the wonderful scenic setting of Loughrea together with enhancing and projecting it's historic past. The 13th century ruins of Garrybreedie with its links to the 6th century is a good example. The extensive area of the Fairgreen with its intact low height, surrounding wall was a joy. Seats at regular intervals added to its significance as an amenity. A very fine children's play area overlooked the lake and the opportunities to view the lake from the car park nearby is applauded. The lake itself must take pride of place as an amenity, the clear water, fed by how many springs is a delight. The extensive facilities at Long Point richly deserve their status as a Blue Flag location. The delightful park beside the old Abbey in the centre of town is a joy. The small bridge over the stream in the park adds to the sheer pleasure, however it was disappointing to note the extent of litter in this location. While the vehicular gate is lockable, it was noted that the pedestrian gate is not and perhaps attention to this - together with an effective entry barrier to the left of the gate would discourage nocturnal litter generation. Incidental presentations, for example at the Business and Technical Park were of a high order and several small areas were used to good advantage for flowerbeds and other amenity areas. The Health Training Centre foreground and the entrance to Taobh Uisce are good examples.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The proximity of the lake brings with it the added advantage of proximity to swans and ducks. The information boards, Birds of Loughrea was informative and well presented. The Dan Corry Park offers endless possibilities for the development of nature bird and wildlife habitats.

The Long Point amenity area had a similar informative sign but it has suffered from vandalism and needs to be renewed. The Loughrea Angler's Association premises looked well. The promotion of birdlife has been given additional weight in recent years. Awareness and appreciation of their role in enhancing the overall experience is now seen as an important element within the overall Tidy Towns Programme. Loughrea with its many fine facilities ready to hand offers numerous opportunities in this regard. Perhaps, there is a local enthusiast, a member of Birdwatch Ireland for example who would draw up a suitable programme. It is known that schools generally welcome involvement in this regard.

Litter Control:

For a town of its population, native and visitor, the extent of litter management was of a high order. Litterbins are available and serviced at many locations, Danesfort Road amenity area, Bride Street while at Long Point there were two types and also the special Fungi bin which caught the eye. Bins were also available at the Vocational School and other locations while a big display sign in Bride Street "Bin your Gum not 150" was a cogent reminder of ones civic responsibilities.

The Fairgreen was delightfully free of litter while minor amounts were noted underneath the seats outside the wall. Some litter was noticed along Lake Road. We noted the public spirited activities of TT volunteers picking up litter in the Abbeyside Park. Sadly, the difficult to reach river also contained much discarded material.

The work of your Committee in the frequent litter pick-ups in public places is applauded together with their involvement in the National Spring Clean earlier in the year.

Waste Minimisation:

This category is as much about getting the community, both business and private to consider and implement a reduction in the generation of waste and use of energy in all its forms as it is about recycling items after use wherever possible. In this context we applaud the staging of seminars on Waste Management and draw your attention to the desirability of the Schools participating in the Green Flag Status exercise. The Bottle Bank/Bring Centre is being well maintained.

Tidiness:

Minor items can drag down the overall impression of an area. The loose shale and pebbles in places in the car park and play area at Long Point detracted from this magnificent location. The old pump on Dublin Road should be removed, while the derelict house beside Murry's Foodstore seems to be unoccupied. The extent of weeds and debris in the small stream at the start of Barrack Street was disappointing while the extent of vandalism at Long Point both to the toilet block and signs is disheartening. Some weeds were noticed on Lake Road at the base of walls. Weeds also disfigured the very fine presentation of O'Reilly's Newsagents. The top wire at the VEC just needs to be made taut again as it has become a bit loose and limp.

The entrance to the cattle mart is very untidy and perhaps they could be persuaded to repaint their entrance gates and give attention to the area before their main premises. The Lakeland Nursing Home was delightfully well presented and an example of how well places can be maintained. The extent of your success in the main shopping area is delightful especially the removal of overhead cables.

Residential Areas:

In common with most towns, Loughrea has seen unprecedented development in the availability of new homes. The presentation of housing estates is in large measure of a very high order. Fortland Meadows, Taobh Uise, Lakeside Park were very well presented. While the latter had some amounts of spoil outside the kerbs. The use of stone name plates is a delightful practise as at Taobh Uisce.

New Development at Waterfront and the huge new housing estate opposite the cemetery where some major earth moving is also taking place beyond the roundabout will provide impressive increases in the housing stock. The coming together of the residents in these various estates to form Residences Associations should be encouraged as collective action to enhance their living environment can often be best advanced by collective action.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Approach roads are in effect the shop window for towns and villages. They help to form the visitor's impression for good or ill of the centre in total. Signage in its presence, intensity and presentation all play a large part. On the Dublin Road approach the town nameplate is damaged while the speed limit signs are somewhat off kilter. The grass at the base of the long, low level wall conspires together with the poor road surface in places to give unfairly a poor first impression. The delightful entry along the old Dublin Road, by the lakeside is much more positive. The town nameplate looked well although be alert to the danger of it being obscured by vegetation. The extension of the new pavement to Long Point along the lake shore is a pure joy.

Replace the sign for Long Point at the Convent crossroads as it is very much below standard. O'Deas's Hotel, itself very well presented, was not appropriately represented by its soiled promotional sign. The small scale black signs indicating Main Street, Bride Street etc are a fine example of good street furnishings. Please avoid the existence of a gap between the fine new pavement and the road surface especially beyond St Joseph's, Mountbellew.

General Impression:

Loughrea is richly endowed by nature and history, its setting by the delightful lake provides ample scope for the creation of a most agreeable living environment. We welcome your decision to create a plan which will identify realistic objectives, establish priorities and indicate the lead agencies in securing these objectives. It was a pleasure to visit Loughrea and their progress in the Tidy Town Programme will be watched with interest. All involved with this year's entry are applauded for their efforts and wished well for 2009.