

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Brannockstown** Ref: **358**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **244**
Category: **B** Date(s): **08/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	30
The Built Environment	50	34
Landscaping	50	30
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	20
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	6
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	35
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	244

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to Brannockstown TidyTowns and to the community you represent for having given selflessly of your time in working towards entering Brannockstown in this 50th anniversary year of the TidyTowns Competition!

Brannockstown is a small village with a good number of people involved on your TidyTowns Special sub committee of the village Community Committee. You have a busy work schedule with weekly meetings for a larger part of the year.

You draw in the resources of your local authority to your assistance. And members of your village Community Committee give practical assistance on certain projects. This is a good arrangement.

Thank you for submitting your Village Study, which is now nine years old. It is however noted that you have commenced the undertaking of a Village Design Statement earlier this year. You also have a concise 5 years TidyTowns Plan and a Task Schedule. However you do not say when this plan starts or ends. Cross referencing between documents, it would appear that the restoration of a village pump/village pumps – there are two - was to be a project in year 1, and you state in your application form that this is a project undertaken for this year. This would imply that Year 1 is 2008. However last year's adjudication said "Well done on work completed for this year which includes the restoration of two village pumps". This is confusing. We note the colour coordination between the map and Task Schedule, and this is clearly cross referenced. However, in the interests of clarity we would respectfully suggest that you date all your documents and plans.

Thank you for submitting your five year plan. It is a pity that you did not detail the consultation process involved in drawing up your Plan. We assume that you held public meetings specifically in this regard, but this is not clear from your submission, nor is it clear from the plan itself. We assume that you have launched your plan. We hope that it was well received. Thank you for submitting a very clear map in your plan. You might

extend its boundaries to include the new housing estates. This is greatly appreciated.

You obviously have a good relationship with your local authority, and you have attended KELT briefings, and obtained a business sponsor locally. Are there other agencies or local businesses to whom you could look for support?

Your school is a great resource for you. Thank you for enclosing the happy photographs of all your "Summer Sun in Carnalway" in May 2007. This event would actually have taken place before last year's adjudication, but we are sure this is an annual event now. The second lot of photographs of your very willing-to-help children picking litter, and planting/weeding at the Brannockstown name sign is not dated.

Delivering newsletters to each house is manageable in a small village. We hope that they are carefully recycled! We do not appear to have received the samples you mention, but this is not a problem. The Leinster Leader obviously came to your assistance with publicity re Liffey Walk. You did submit a copy of this. The local newsheet is also a good idea. The community meetings obviously draw in a cross section of the population due to your good association with the Community Committee.

Your local school connection is obviously strong and productive. These children are the future of our TidyTowns and Villages. Well done on the Green Flag achievement! Thank you too for letting us have a copy of the successful application .

We are very glad to hear that being active in TidyTowns has created a great sense of community. This is a great thing to hear. It is what we, in TidyTowns like to believe, and it makes our work so much more worthwhile!

The Built Environment:

Brannockstown is a lovely village with a character of its own. It is linear and dispersed and sits in against a landscaped background. It is really not at all like a traditional rural Irish village because of its settlement pattern, and its lack of a street/village core/business enclave. A lot of the character comes from its riparian setting and its lovely landscaped gardens and houses, and this is also partly due to its busy equine centred hinterland with the associated parkland. The built environment has, in the main, been conserved. This aspect of the village is worth looking after.

This built heritage in the village and area is interesting, and is a source of educational, amenity, and tourism potential. This heritage is situated in its natural surrounds and has not been encroached upon. We know that you appreciate this aspect of your built heritage well. The Liffey bridge on the Southern approach is a lovely old arched stone bridge.

The Baptist church is a landmark building on the Kilcullen approach with a good school and teachers residence type house all presented very well in this important access area. There are some lovely old stone houses in the village. There is one with a very perfect fretted bargeboard opposite the Ballymore Road junction. There is a very well kept cream pebble dash traditional style house (apart from PVC windows) opposite The Grange at the Ballymore Road junction with a good stone wall adjoining.

The pumps in the village centre and on the Kilcullen Road are looking well, but in the village pump area a plastic flower container obscured the nice stone plaque. The pump is recessed, and the area around is well planted.

We will look forward to the proposed heritage trail.

We would strongly suggest that you engage the services of your local authority's architects department or alternative architectural / landscape architectural advice in relation to the detail of the development of your focal point space. You should also consult with the Conservation Officer of the local authority.

We are glad to see that your village sign is bilingual.

Landscaping:

Brannockstown is located in magnificent countryside, having the decided advantage of its hillside, riverside, and treed setting, located in an unspoilt area. Despite its proximity to the more urbanised parts of the county, the village has really retained its rural ambience, largely through the maintenance of its lovely landscaped approaches, stone walls and hedgerows, together with its waterside amenities, as well as through the maintenance of its village built fabric, curtilage size and old plantings. The vegetation is native and unspoilt. The tree cover is of mainly native deciduous species. It is an area that has managed to retain its great parklands due to the continued use of these estates as stud farms.

Your own landscaping of the village area is adding to the green nature of your environment. We are impressed that you are not overusing the more urban landscape forms of baskets and tubs.

The planting at the pumps is simple and appropriate. All your planted spaces were well maintained on adjudication day. We look forward to the many projects you plan in this area.

The trees in the vicinity of the Church are a great asset to the visual amenities of the village.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Your riverside location is a wildlife Paradise! The Liffey valley must have thousands of species of wildflowers, birds, fish and insects to discover. Your potential in this area to go forward is huge. It is a resource so many villages would be jealous of!

We are glad that you again have access to the riverside way. We are glad to hear of your organised walks, and complement the landowners concerned in their cooperation with your groups. You actually also held walks in 2007 according to the 2007 report.

Obviously most of your time and energy in this area went into negotiating your R.O.W. issues in the last 12 months.

We are delighted to hear that you are planning a nature trail (waymarked v. once-off walks) around the village. Take advice with regard to interpretation in its signage aspects, as it would be a shame to destroy the visual aspects through inappropriate signage. Do not rush this process.

Before you even start to begin thinking about laying out a nature trail you should survey what you have.

A logical place to start would be to carry out a very basic survey of wild flora and fauna in the area. Perhaps your local school could help you with this? Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. In last year's adjudication it was also recommended that you might consider erecting an interpretative panel, so do remember to endeavour to do this for 2009! Findings made public on information panels would add to the enjoyment of your village for local and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. Rural dwellers often have a great knowledge of the wildflowers and birdlife. Consult with your community council.

Litter Control:

It is great to see that the school has attained its Green Flag!

Litter control on adjudication day was excellent. We are delighted that you have your Green School to help you out in this. You might consider organising a Litter Seminar with the Litter Warden of your local authority. Do you have a weekly litter pick up rota? Do continue to take part in the Spring Clean. What per centage of your village litter is recycled?

Waste Minimisation:

You are promoting recycling where possible. We note that you segregate on clean up days. Do you know what per centages are recycled in the village? What arrangements are made for people who do not have transport? We hope that you will get a recycling area in due course. Well done on the composting initiatives in the school and amongst your members. We are glad you have home recycling bins.

Waste minimisation is about more than not having litter in your street or indeed recycling. It involves the prevention of litter accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it in the first case. You might refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. Consider organising or attending a Waste Minimisation Workshop with your local authority. In your local school there will be opportunities to involve the students in an effort to work towards this end.

Perhaps you might prepare a flyer/newsletter on this subject? As a local community you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a "Bring and Take Day". This would involve using a local hall / community centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste) and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in their local area. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2009.

Tidiness:

Road signs in general are a credit to your area engineer. They are all in good condition. There is one rusty white pole in the main village area.

In general the village and its surroundings were tidy. One of the businesses which last year's adjudicator referred under "tidiness" also has been fairly satisfactorily screened. This is not quite so with the second, as yet.

Footpaths and verges as well as stone walls and hedgerows were in general well cared for, and the public buildings - church and school were very good.

There was no graffiti in evidence in the centre of the village. This is good.

The entire bridge area is untidy. The bridge itself needs weeding in its immediate vicinity, and the pull-in area is bare and scrubby in places. The overall look is one of an urban difficult area with the security fencing. Even the green security fencing is not in keeping with the area. Screening of these fences is really required, and you may be able to commence this work soon, now that legal issues have been resolved. On the Eastern side of the road at the bridge, the barbed wire at the stile area, and the barbed wire in the grass area did not look well at this scenic spot. The red signage could do with renewal, and the road crash barrier might be replaced with a more aesthetically pleasing but functioning barrier. If you are going to encourage people to come to this area, the issue of safety with regard to pedestrians crossing from the ad-hoc parking space to the walkway area should be addressed. The entire verge treatment also needs attention.

The paths and verges throughout the village were generally well weeded.

Residential Areas:

The residences of the village are very well maintained in general, both those in the streets, those on the approaches, and those in the few estates. The cul-de-sac estate on the Kilcullen approach is very well landscaped and maintained. It is a real oasis of greenery and peace. The fenced-in area in the green has post and wire fencing which could be softened with landscaping. The access has nice planting boxes and barrels which are colourful. It is a very tidy estate. Only one rusting boundary on the road frontage needs attention.

Moorehill Wood estate on the Naas approach had well trimmed grass, but it could do with extra planting.

The Grange private development off Dunlavin Road looks tidy, with neat fields to the South. The house and garden at the South side of the entrance to the general cul-de-sac is a little untidy. The estate in the village (near the pump) has good natural boundary hedging which has been retained, and provides an excellent sense of enclosure with its mature plantings. There appeared to be no name on the entrance area, nor on your map. Wildfield/Avondale area looked well, but again further planting could be put in place.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The approach from Kilcullen is well treed, and has the Sli na Slainte route running south from it by Gilltown Stud Farm. There is a good entry sign in metal surrounded by colourful flowers. The new kerbing feature against the existing good stone wall - forming part of the cutilege of Sallymount Stud is, we consider somewhat "overkill", as the estate stone wall is a feature which is visually independent and stands alone. The wall is also part of the cutilege of what is probably a Protected Structure, Sallymount House. The planters in particular are somewhat over-fussy as the kerbside planting is adequate in itself. The finished pathway along this access is good.

There are lovely views along the road running south by Gilltown across the race track, and the road is quiet and level for walking. On adjudication day the grass along the edges was being cut.

Along the Naas Road approach the entrance to the village is simple and in its natural state. It has great trees again and old stone walls, with a minute section of wall needing repair.

The Dunlavin Road has been resurfaced and the edges have been well dealt with. All the road signs are excellent, as is the village name sign. The Ragusa stud signs need renewal, and jars with the otherwise pristine effect.

The Ballymore Road likewise has excellent stone walls, is very neatly trimmed despite obvious pipe laying of recent times.

General Impression:

Brannockstown has had a busy year between the planning process and the legal process. This has taken some time away from progressing in certain other areas. Your plan is your blueprint. However a lot of what is proposed is as yet aspirational . Good luck with all your ventures! You are approaching the tasks ahead in an organised manner. We also feel that there is a good community spirit to build upon, and a lot of what makes for success is on-the-ground work. We would encourage you to continue to seek the excellent advice which is available to you from your local authority on many issues – be it Conservation, Heritage, Environmental issues and others. You will also have the new residents to help you and to bring new ideas and manpower to your ranks. We appreciate the problems you have had.