

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Castlecomer** Ref: **389**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **263**
Category: **C** Date(s): **16/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	42
The Built Environment	50	40
Landscaping	50	31
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	42
Litter Control	50	23
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	11
Residential Areas	40	25
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	34
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	263

Overall Development Approach:

This has been one of the most interesting and inspirational entries this year, largely on account of the superb initiatives connected with the Castlecomer Demesne Company. Indeed, were it not for these initiatives there would be only a very small rise in marking due to improved litter control, landscaping and roads; the main increases in marks are all connected with the successful work of the Demesne Company. Thank you for your very detailed submission. Features which have done exceptionally well will be mentioned in the following brief notes, and also features that have not achieved such a high standard and where improvement would be welcomed; features not mentioned below may be taken as quite satisfactory. Your map only showed the western part of the town and did not include the bridge, estate, Dublin road, etc. It has been noted that you are in the second year of your 5-year plan and that considerable progress has been made. Congratulations.

The Built Environment:

The commanding Roman Catholic church is well presented; the Church of Ireland church with its landmark tower may be taken architecturally as an adjunct to the old estate and as such forms part of the impressive complex of buildings. The national school occupies a charming enclave near the bridge; Scoil Muire gan Smol is very well kept, as indeed are Scoil na mBuachallai and the large Community School. The Hospital in its well maintained grounds does not require paint but would be more welcoming if painted; the Fire Station does need painting; the handsome Post Office building would be improved by painting. Of the business premises, the Lime Tree and the Pharmacy opposite impressed; it was a pity to see the Avalon Hotel closed and that plans to convert the convent to a hotel have not materialised. The 'Commercial Establishment' was admired; not so Eurospar. However, the most formidable improvements have been to the yard buildings of the Castlecomer Demesne – the cleaning and restoration of stonework, the rebuilding of walls, provision of fencing, roadways and paths, the creation of craft shops in former stables and coach houses, and the new reception area, cafe, shop and mining exhibition premises: this latter building is distinctively modern and

welcoming and blends wonderfully well with its venerable neighbours. This complex of buildings was photographed and will be entered for the Heritage award.

Landscaping:

It is splendid that you have your own polytunnel and that young people work there. The results of this were seen in floral arrangements throughout the town. It is good that you no longer concentrate on annuals but have established shrubberies and herbaceous borders. Some of the landscaping projects were a bit disappointing – for example the potentially impressive corner of Ballyragget Road and Barrack Hill where the upper part of the site was overgrown and neglected. Some plots laid out for bedding had not been planted in mid June. The surroundings of Dinguile are very pleasantly laid out, as are the open spaces at the Church Avenue estate.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The increase in marking here is mainly due to initiatives within the Demesne. The lakes, where fishing is well controlled, the nature walks, the introduction of aquatic birds, the presence of deer, the information boards – these are among the elements combining to provide a truly admirable vicinity. It was good to see groups of students enjoying an outing in this natural amenity area – certainly the demand will proliferate as word gets around. The Lakes, Fishing Stands and their surroundings were photographed for an award – do not be disappointed if you are not successful with awards – there are dozens of entries from throughout the country and adjudicators will certainly try again in the coming years. It was good to read that upwards of four dozen trees have been planted in the town. The ancient limes in the town centre were looking wonderful.

Litter Control:

Several new-looking bins were seen. None were filled to overflowing on adjudication day this year. Control was comparatively good over previous years and it is hoped that this will be the start of a general improvement.

Waste Minimisation:

It was good to read of the innovative pilot project with Kilkenny County Council, the results of which will be assessed next year. Your mark in this section is higher than average – you are clearly coming to grips with the concept of waste minimisation, a topic that will become more and more important as time goes on.

Tidiness:

Rusty corrugated iron roofs on business premises at the top of the town were unsightly, but not as unsightly as the derelict mansion that dominates the town centre. Ugly poles and wires are a blemish in some streets. There is an unusually high incidence of poorly designed or mass-produced shop signs. A surprisingly decrepit section of fencing was seen to the side of the RC Church – the kind of thing that would hardly be noticed were it not for several other untidy sites as mentioned above. There were unkempt sections of verge on some approach roads. The frontage of the brick factory is well screened.

Residential Areas:

Very attractive and well preserved brick dormer cottages were seen on the Kilkenny road, also attractive old terrace houses several of which were charmingly painted. Housing enclaves on and above the Kilkenny road were mainly very well presented; there were only a very few exceptions, where railings were not maintained or boundary walls painted. Marymount is a well-presented estate with a nicely planted frontispiece. Church Avenue estate and Dinguile have already been mentioned in connection with their spacious landscaping.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Street surfaces are good, but they are even better outside rather than inside the town area. Street furniture is of good quality; if all the lamp-standards in the business streets can be replaced to a more attractive design it will be a big step forward. The parking bays and general traffic arrangements are a distinct improvement. A pity that part of the parapet wall of the wonderful old bridge has been cemented. Stonework in many places – as well as in the Demesne – was seen to be of very high quality.

General Impression:

A great deal of headway has been made under your 5-year plan. Generally speaking it is the central, or business, area of the town that really needs upgrading in comparison to other towns; the suburbs are as good as the average and the Demesne raises the entire profile. Somebody once remarked 'Castlecomer has everything going for it', but it is only now that the real potential is beginning to make itself manifest. All good wishes for the continuance of this trend.

