

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Gowran** Ref: **392**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **277**
Category: **B** Date(s): **17/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	46
The Built Environment	50	37
Landscaping	50	38
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	32
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	31
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	277

Overall Development Approach:

Gowran has done very well indeed since last year, and indeed over recent years. Your marks are still on the increase - a difficult feat at the top end of the competition. It is good that you have support from the County Council, from FAS and from the Farm Relief Programme. It is some years since this adjudicator visited Gowran and the improvements have been phenomenal – probably not so obvious to you who are involved in the daily grind, but is it very obvious to the outsider. Heartiest congratulations on this. A more comprehensive map would be appreciated – the map supplied did not show all the new housing estates nor name the streets, and the church end of the town was off the map. We try to look at everything but some features may be missed for this reason.

The Built Environment:

Work at the priory has been outstanding. The conversion of the old church as a sculpture museum has been first rate – and apart from this it is good at last to see nationally important sculpture of the mediaeval Gowran school brought in out of the weather. The present limestone Gothic Roman Catholic church was seen to be very well maintained, as was the nearby school with its attractive mural painting. The parish house was beautifully presented. The ancient ruined tower house is impressive: some day it may be taken on by its owner or others as a challenge for restoration. Of the business premises, Loughlin's impressed the most.

Landscaping:

The grounds of the church and parish house were seen to be very well maintained – the latter with amusing effigy animals. The shrubbery at the school was badly in need of weeding on the date of the visit – a good forking-out in autumn will be desirable. Gairdin na n-Og is a most worthwhile initiative. The cemetery is beautifully kept, and mowing was in progress on the lawns round the church at the time of the visit. The planting on the Kilkenny road – and small areas of planting throughout the town, as well as the lovely open

space that is the Fair Green – were most favourably noted. The gardens fronting the Priory have really come into their own: their design was always excellent, their maintenance is first class. It is interesting to learn that the committee has to maintain the roadside verges – in some local authority areas the Council does not allow this, probably for safety reasons, and therefore approach road verges are often neglected. It would be good to get a definite ruling on this.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Trees are properly considered under this heading. Your tree-planting programmes, as outlined on the entry form, is impressive. It is especially good to know that the apple and pear trees are special children's projects. You say that 420 trees have been planted, an astonishing number. Bird boxes were not seen but it is good to know that they are there: do you know the extent of occupancy? Perhaps it is as well that the fen is in private hands so that the birds and animals remain undisturbed. You are fortunate in having river, marsh and forest and so close to the town. It is a great bonus for the residents of Bradog Way to have the woodland immediately before them.

Litter Control:

Though some litter was seen on Mill Road, and also at Parkmore, in general the standard of control was good. It is splendid that children are involved in litter-picking. (Can we look forward to the day when litter-picking will be an unnecessary activity?)

Waste Minimisation:

The Recycling Unit at the hall was seen to be clean and free of rubbish. It is good to read that you have succeeded in getting a separate collection for recyclables, and that businesses are now separating their own refuse. These are big steps forward and clearly not without a lot of hard work to achieve.

Tidiness:

Gowran is a tidy village so it is a pity to have to remark on a few areas that combine to prevent an increase in marks under this heading. The Quick Pick premises is smart but altogether over-enthusiastic with signs and notices. A rusty corrugated iron structure was seen near the tower house, and the picturesque gate lodge at the top of the town appeared to have been abandoned. There are still unsightly overhead cables in spite of the ducting having been installed six years ago as you describe! Lanigan's garage is as good as it can be considering its function. (In an ideal world motor-based businesses would be situated on the outskirts of towns so there would be easier access for their customers and town-centre space could be given over to housing.)

Residential Areas:

The terraces of stone cottages are what give Gowran its real character and flavour, and also the two storied houses, some of them well painted but a few needing freshening-up or repair – mainly on the opposite side of the street. The Fair Green is now a delightful small enclave with a true sense of enclosure – years ago this adjudicator remembers mentioning the dereliction and that one side of the square had disappeared! What was very interesting on this visit was to continue into The Steeples where there is also a lovely sense of urban enclosure – indeed of a somewhat collegiate nature – an imaginative use of design elements and a safe place for children. This modern estate fits the Gowran townscape in scale very well. Parkmore is less interesting from a design point of view – in fact it is rather bland - but is well kept by its residents. Bradog is rather different – a decision must have been taken to build to an unusual height for Gowran – but somehow, perhaps because it is away from the street – it does not seem to obtrude too greatly; it is still rather bleak, and there are opportunities for more tree and shrub planting to soften it. It goes without saying that these homes are very well presented. What is most commendable is that these new estates are part of the town, and not on remote sites where the residents do not have pedestrian access to town services.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Surfaces and paving are good. Stone walls are to be preferred to cement blocks – and there are many fine stone walls in the vicinity - but on the Kilkenny road the solution of painting the blocks has been successful. Parking bays at the church are well maintained. The white railings near the church must be the bane of the committee for they obviously need constant cleaning or painting: how about trying a darker colour next time?

General Impression:

A town where past and present converge harmoniously, a town full of hidden delights for those willing to find them, a town maintained to a very high standard by its hard-working and perceptive residents.

