

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Graiguenamanagh** Ref: **393**
County: **Kilkenny** Mark: **230**
Category: **C** Date(s): **19/06/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	41
The Built Environment	50	30
Landscaping	50	28
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	30
Waste Minimisation	20	9
Tidiness	30	8
Residential Areas	40	22
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	30
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	230

Overall Development Approach:

This adjudicator had not been in Graiguenamanagh for some years, and then not as TidyTowns adjudicator. On the present occasion he found the town to be bright and progressive-looking which was unexpected due to the negative tone of your entry. Certainly the social and economic problems which you mention are very real, and certainly they must have a depressing effect on the community and certainly the town would be looking better if they were not present: but the fact is it was looking quite well to the outsider, and certain aspects were looking very good indeed. In the following notes, sites or features are mentioned where they are unusually impressive and also where they are not quite up to standard; sites and features that are not mentioned may be taken as satisfactory. Real action is clearly needed from the Local Authority in relation to the problem of dereliction. In your next submission, please write the names of all locations that should be inspected, and also the names of all streets and estates, on your map (rather than numbers on another sheet) as it is difficult to manipulate two sets of papers while walking through the town, especially in wet weather. You may not know that Graiguenamanagh is included in the book 'The Most Beautiful Villages of Ireland' – it is of course not a village, but in Anglo-US terms it is; the pictures of the town have been much admired.

The Built Environment:

Restoration and conservation projects are very striking indeed. The Abbey of course takes pride of place as always; it looked absolutely inspirational in the Mass that was broadcast from it three or so years ago; it is good to learn that it is also the venue for concerts. The range of old granite buildings (not identified on the map) near Brandonvale that have been adapted as a Veterinary Centre are superb. (The cement block wall in front of it should be replaced by something more in keeping – railings, perhaps, if matching stonework proves too expensive. So is the Guest House which has been in operation for some years in the converted warehouse on the Quay. What is disappointing about the Quay – undoubtedly due to the economic factors to which you refer – is that there has not been more renovation/restoration on this remarkably beautiful site. The

Boat Club (not on the map either) building is well presented. So is the Old Market House – very dignified, though purists might not be charmed by the present colour; and so is the Public Library. The schools all looked well maintained.

Landscaping:

There has been no major landscaping project in Graiguenamanagh prior to the opening of the new by-pass, where the roundabouts, perimeter and edging have been very skilfully and gently set into the existing terrain: the NRA and its contractors are adept at this, and this is 'true' landscaping (we tend to use the term to cover anything from flowerbeds to plant tubs). It is very encouraging to read that there will be a sculptural project: make sure that a sculptor of repute is engaged and that we do not see anything like the dire figures that pass for sculpture in Dublin; the motifs should take inspiration from the sculpture of the Abbey. That having been said, some very pleasing small plantings of shrubs were seen, and annuals in tubs, window boxes and hanging baskets throughout the town. It is very good to learn that you raise your own plants. The playground was neat and colourful. Your plans to develop the pitch and putt grounds as a sporting amenity are commended.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The increase in marking under this heading has been due to your woodland acquisition and to the young trees planted in the neighbourhood of the by-pass. (Incidentally, trees in the urban area are also considered under this heading rather than under Landscaping.) There was some confusion as to what is Silaire Wood and what is Graiguenamagh Wood, but this was sorted out: please make this clear on next year's map. There is great diversity of tree species. It was encouraging to read that post-primary students place and monitor bird-boxes: it would be interesting to know the extent of the take-up of tenants.

Litter Control:

As far as one could judge on one visit, there was a distinct improvement in litter control from that described by last year's adjudicator. It is excellent that you involve the Guide and Scout troupes. Can we look forward to the day when their services will no longer be required?

Waste Minimisation:

The bring bank was clean and neat. The fine granite pillars were favourably noted. Your mark is above the national average, due to the procedures which were praised by last year's adjudicator.

Tidiness:

Unfortunately an unusual amount of dereliction was seen, some in quite prominent places. It is understood that you are in consultation with the Local Authority about this. They have powers to take action, but are usually cautious about doing so. Unsightly poles – mentioned in your submission – were seen. The overhead wires in the main thoroughfares are absolutely frightful; their removal would improve the visual aspect of the entire streetscape no end, as has already been seen to very good effect along part of the Quay. An untidy roadside site was noticed at M. Doherty's. You are dealing with ivy growth, but do not let this take over all your energies.

Residential Areas:

There is a wonderful stock of older housing in Graiguenamanagh, mainly from the 19th century. The alms houses near the Abbey are unique and charming, as are the dignified terraces of larger houses nearby. Cloney House and Ballyogan House were greatly admired. Well kept terrace houses were also favourably noted in Barrow (Lane? – please excuse an unreadable note). The mid 20th century estates above the town were mainly well looked after, though here and there railings or boundary walls needed attention. For a town with so much unemployment there was a remarkable amount of new building. Friar's Hill looked promising. Brandon Park and Woodland estates were very well maintained indeed, the sense of colour of individual homes being most effective. Consideration should be given to more colour at Fairview.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The substantial rise in marking here can be largely attributed to the long-awaited by-pass and also to the realignment of feeder roads and the new roundabouts. It is hoped that there has been a satisfactory diminution of heavy traffic in the main streets and that it will be possible to improve surfaces and paving in the town centre. Surfaces were surprisingly good in older estates above the town. Excellent use of stone walls was seen, especially in the Wexford direction and in the estate above the roundabout. The car park at the waterside was well kept. Street name signs were very well designed, readable and ubiquitous.

General Impression:

This is a wonderfully picturesque town, superbly situated. As some wit remarked, 'you can't live on scenery', and this is part of the theme of your submission. However, having made that point, you have gone on to take action on a number of fronts, and the results are already being seen. Everything takes time, but you now seem to be moving quickly. Do keep up the impetus, and also the pressure on official bodies. You have a wonderful heritage, and you are adding to it and improving it every day.