

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Birr** Ref: **549**
County: **Offaly** Mark: **228**
Category: **E** Date(s): **08/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	31
The Built Environment	50	36
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	21
Litter Control	50	26
Waste Minimisation	20	4
Tidiness	30	14
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	28
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	228

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Birr to the 2008 Tidy Towns Competition. Thank you for the completed entry form but the adjudicator found part of this quite difficult to interpret. The adjudicator noted that a 3 Year Tidy Towns Plan for Birr was not included with your entry and you might consider preparing this for next year. The Plan should cover the period 2008 – 2011 and indicate year by year the projects that you intend to undertake, the likely cost and potential project partners. Tidy Towns in Birr seems to enjoy a good level of voluntary support together with that of the Local Authority and appropriate agencies. Do remember that the Tidy Towns Handbook gives great information and suggestions. Both new Committees and those who have been involved in the competition for some time will find this booklet really useful.

The Built Environment:

The provision of some additional street furniture is noted including that planned for the N.52. Opposite the old Castle entrance the stone pier that has been repaired was examined. Birr has some fine buildings and some beautiful old doorways with good architectural detailing were examined on John's Mall. Individuals have made great effort at presenting their building and The Chestnut is a good example of where hanging baskets has enhanced a building. Derelict buildings continue to be a problem in the town. Have you discussed these with the Local Authority who have powers that they may be able to use if other measures fail? At the Maltings the old stone buildings here some of which have been restored were much admired. Oxmantown Mall is a really attractive area and the Theatre building is interesting. Emmet Square as the focal point for Birr in the view of this adjudicator lacks serious visual impact and additional landscaping here might be considered. Has any consideration been given to reducing the car parking here and developing additional pedestrian space? The Mullholland's Pharmacy in O'Connell Street was much admired and the four carvings here are really unusual. Perhaps the wirescape on the frontage here could be concealed? The completed Civic Office are indeed worthy of Birr.

Landscaping:

The new tree planting is a great investment in the future appearance of Birr. The landscaped area at the John's Mall junction was most attractively presented and the two fine mature trees here are a beautiful feature of this part of Birr. At Market Square some additional landscaping would have brought some further colour to this area and this might be considered for 2009. When you are considering future landscaping do consider the potential of planting for year round colour and visual impact. Hanging baskets and window boxes were noted in many parts of Birr and congratulations on the effort involved in making this happen.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The adjudicator examined portion of the riverside walk and this is an attractive area. However on adjudication day the overall impact was marred by considerable quantities of litter at the entrance off Syngfield Road by the bridge. The water feature project was noted by the adjudicator. Has there been any progress on the suggestion of a wildlife survey made in the last two year's reports? With the river many trees and other habitats you have the potential to do well under this adjudication category.

Litter Control:

It was encouraging to read of a number of prosecutions for litter offenders. Unfortunately on adjudication day litter was a major problem in Birr both in the town centre and on approach roads. Litter was present on Glebe Street and Burke's Hill and in the Park off Syngfield road and the Riverwalk entrance here. The problem was also present in Emmet Square at the base of the Pillar and on the N52 Nenagh approach opposite the terraced houses. High Street was littered and also the area around the base of the Castle wall to the road. The quality of the bins at the car park opposite the Castle was very poor and they looked rather dirty. Litter was present under the clothing bank. In the Model School Road very bad littering was noted in the area of the very attractive cottages here.

Waste Minimisation:

The adjudicator understood from the entry form that some form of paper recycling was tried or was underway in the town. This is an excellent project under this adjudication category. No other projects were noted under this category of the entry form. Last year's report gave some good suggestions that are still valid.

Tidiness:

Hopefully your grant application in respect of graffiti was / will be successful. Your work to control weed growth and fly posting are worthy projects under this category. A very untidy area by the side of the road near the entrance to Meadow Court needed attention. In the Park some of the seats needed to be re-varnished and the car that looked abandoned in the grounds of the old Distillery might be moved by the owner. In O'Connell Street at the archway opposite Kellys very bad graffiti was noted and this needs urgent attention. It seemed to have been there for a long time. Very bad signage clutter was noted at the start of John's Mall and perhaps some rationalization is needed here. On Emmet Street a van on the pavement does not appear to have moved for a long time and perhaps it could be moved by the owner as Moss was taking over.

Residential Areas:

The cottages and terraced houses on John's Mall were admired as were was the good grass areas and young trees at Meadow Court. Good hedging was a fine feature at Elm Park. Near the old Distillery the restored Mill building with modern architectural additions was much admired. On the N52 good colour use on the terrace of houses here caught the eye but bad weed growth was seen at the kerbing at Highgate. Watch out for weed growth in the guttering of a few houses along High Street. The landscaping at the entrance to Hollypark was excellently presented. The builder here has used an excellent colour scheme. Spinners Town House was a real delight and the sense of colour here was impressive.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The main approach roads would have benefited from additional work and in some cases verges needed to be cut or were quite rough. Weed growth at the base of approach road was also another difficulty that was noted. The Oxmantown Mall is a beautiful area excellently presented. Along O'Connell Street there was a good sense of strong colours that added to the street streetscape.

General Impression:

It was a great pleasure for your adjudicator to visit Birr and we wish you well with your projects for next year. Do consider the 3 year planned approach to your work suggested earlier in this report.

