

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Portlaw** Ref: **241**
County: **Waterford** Mark: **227**
Category: **C** Date(s): **13/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	27
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	23
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	3
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	28
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	29
General Impression	10	6
TOTAL MARK	400	227

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the very comprehensive application form supplemented by map with relevant areas colour coded.

The additional pictorial collection gives an insight into the rich history of Portlaw and also depicts evidence of a number of major changes that have occurred under the various category headings.

We thank you for this and for the comments on your experience in the competition to date.

The committee of 8 has a rather large town area to cover and your efforts to involve the local community are to be commended as it is not easy to get everybody working together for a common good.

The comments of last years adjudicator about working to a 3 year plan still hold true it is something that you should consider as the town has a lot more potential than reflected in the present marking.

Getting good new people involved is the key to the success of any organisation and it would benefit you if you had a few additional bodies that could call on.

The Built Environment:

It has been some years since the adjudicator has been to Portlaw and that was only a fleeting visit one which did not allow for an appreciation of what is a very attractive and unusually designed town.

One presumes given its strong association with landed estate family the Malcomsons that it was planned town.

The design of houses on Brown Street and William Street are very symmetric and different to most other places.

Malcomson Square is an attractive square that has been enhanced by a re development programme which was well thought and captures what a town square should be like.

The Heritage Centre is part of a beautiful building that is shared by both Brown Street and William Street.

Unfortunately the centre was closed to the public which is more the pity as it looks like it houses interesting pictorial and historical records of Portlaoigh.

St Patrick's Church, celebrating its 150th anniversary and having a prominent spot overlooking the town, was resplendent on the day, church goers are accommodated well with the provision of a new car parking facility above the graveyard.

The Graveyard was maintained to a very high standard and credit is due to those people that help with the upkeep of both the Church and the graveyard.

Compliments to both GAA and Soccer Clubs for the manner in which they have maintained and presented their respective clubs situated at opposite ends of the town.

Business premises in the town were presented to a good standard and it would be unfair to single out any one in particular.

Some of the public buildings mentioned in last years report have not made any major improvements but on the positive side the Public Library is a very nicely designed and compact building.

The private dwellings in the core area were well maintained with the odd exception, the residents of both Brown Street and William Street take a bow for setting the standard.

The Market Square new development is very well designed in the context of the original streetscape, well done to both the design architect and the developer for their foresight and creativity.

The town has its fair share of dereliction but there is no point in highlighting them individually as they are known to the committee. A voluntary committee can only do so much but asking the County Council to issue dereliction act compliance notices where the need arises.

The name signs around the town are very attractive and also it's good to note that Ta siad as Gaeilge freisin

Landscaping:

This is the strongest category in your application and you are to be commended for the ongoing work of maintaining both existing and new shrub and flower beds.

The River walk is particularly attractive and the work undertaken has been extensive. It has once again been nominated for the Waterside Award.

The Committee has encouraged both business owners and private residents to add colour by providing hanging baskets and other forms of planters and they have responded accordingly where one viewed a good blend of annuals and perennials on the day.

Public planting in the centre of the town was a very high standard and tubs populated by colourful begonias all along William Street added very much to that particularly well kept street.

The shrub beds both at Talbot Street and at Connolly Road had been revitalised and are tended to on a regular basis by committee members.

Finally one has to congratulate the person or persons who have the responsibility of maintaining the Grotto it was in splendid condition and contributed very much to the overall high standard of landscaping observed. It is important that you endeavour to maintain this high standard and indeed strive to do even better in the years ahead.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

It was noted that you have done additional work in this category since last year, but you are still encouraged to seek advice on the development of a specific wild life project such as installing information boards at the riverside park and at one of the nature trails.

Advice should be sought from the County Wildlife Ranger or equivalent and do also involve the schools.

The area has a myriad of animal and bird wildlife, mind you the arrival mink in the area is a bit problematic as they can cause so much destruction and trying to curtail them multiplying will be difficult.

Litter Control:

The litter control was quite good considering that the adjudication took place early morning after a Saturday night.

There are a few areas where people congregate that could be difficult to control, even around the excellent newly revamped square so one has to be vigilant.

It is important that you try to organise local people in outlying estates to do weekly picks where at all possible. This is something that you might consider having in place pre next year's competition.

I know that it's difficult for a smallish committee to do everything, but this is one category that is very important to any town or village and it might be worth considering asking one individual to handle the management of litter control.

Waste Minimisation:

This is a category that additional marks can be gained by engaging in some very simple relevant projects.

To see what has been done on other parts of the country and also to gain ideas that you can convert into action items do consult the Race Against Waste publication and also refer to the Race Against Waste website. If you have difficulty in accessing the above consult the County Environmental Officer.

Tidiness:

The town was quite tidy on adjudication day that has been helped by the provision of some new cobbled footpaths in central areas and also the internal road surfaces in the main were good, The proliferation of overhead wires takes away somewhat from the streetscape, maybe there are plans ahead to duct these underground as it is happening in other places in the County. I would advise the committee to lobby the local public representatives to make representations on your behalf and also get other local organisations to support you. There are a number of derelict premises in the town which is a problem in most places, and all I can advise on this one is to encourage the owners of these properties to make an effort to clean them up in some fashion. It is sad to see a gate lodge, surrounding entrance and wrought iron railings at the market square end of the town in such a bad state. Who is responsible for this property? Overall you have maintained a good standard in this category.

Residential Areas:

The adjudicator visited the newer estates featured in your pictorial supplement and was impressed with how properties and the communal areas were maintained so well done to the residents, The Oakville development is a particularly attractive housing area and it is maturing steadily, internal road surfaces were good and estate landscaping appropriate. The committee should, if not done so already, invite a representative of from each of these areas to join and help you with elements of your activities as a Tidy Towns group as it is very difficult for a small group of people to cater for a town that has expanded so much in the last number of years. The existing housing developments within the town were very good and having already mentioned a few areas in a previous section I would like to add the residents of Georges Street and Queen Street Upper and Lower. The attractive and very visible street name plates made it easier for the adjudicator to identify places. Good to note that the Irish language is given its due status.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The entrances in to the town of Portlaoighair were very acceptable in both appearance and tidiness helped by the very attractive name plate signs in both Irish and English. The entrance off the R680 was quite good, but the post and rail concrete fencing at Coolfin Gardens could be painted at least and long term should be removed and replaced with some appropriate timber structure. Those concrete fences have become so dated and are very tatty when not looked after - well that's my personal gripe for the day.

General Impression:

It was my first visit to Portlaoighair in a good number of years and like other places around the country it has changed fairly dramatically in terms of expansion and improvements to the core area. Malcomson Square is such an attractive focal point now that it has benefited from the urban renewal programme. Road surfaces and footpaths have been upgraded and this has had a major positive impact on the town centre area, individual residents have responded by refurbishing properties and surrounds. You are a small but proactive committee, but you might need to expand and get people on board who will share the work load. As was stated in last year's report it is important that you consider a 3 year simple work plan as it helps to focus on key issues. You are wished well in the years ahead.