

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Listowel** Ref: **345**
County: **Kerry** Mark: **293**
Category: **D** Date(s): **19/06/2008**
21/07/2007

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2008 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 47 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 40 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 38 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 36 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 32 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 8 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 18 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 30 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 36 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 293 |

Overall Development Approach:

Listowel TidyTowns Group is welcome to the 2008 competition We were delighted to read your "Fixit" document that tackles all of the issues raised in last year's report! This is a marvelous way of taking on board the comments of the adjudicators in a positive way and getting the most you can from the competition. You would appear to have a good relationship with all aspects of the community including the Town Council, schools, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce and local residents associations. Sponsorship from local businesses must be of great benefit to you. The Tidy Listowel Competitions and arts competitions for schools are unusual and worthwhile initiatives.

The Built Environment:

The buildings of the town generally looked well on the day. The Harp and Lion looked marvellous in its traditional neo celtic style with ornate plasterwork. The Maid of Erin is also an attractive front but unfortunately it has lost its original timber sash windows above- would it be possible to replace these? Do ensure that the render isn't removed from vernacular buildings. This is not only incorrect from a conservation point of view but can also lead to problems with water penetration. Kiely's is another attractive traditional shopfront which was admired. The Listowel Civic Centre incorporating Courthouse etc looked well. The mosaic front to Galvin's was also greatly admired and was glittering away in the sunlight! The Listowel Arms looked well on the Square as did the Banks. The Cultural Centre was extremely fresh. St. Michael's College was fresh but its signage was a little faded. The Library and School opposite were both looking well. The window boxes to the Credit Union were admired and the Plaza was very fresh. The Garda Station was fine but the plinth of its railings to the front was in need of a fresh coat of paint. We were delighted to hear of improvements made at the CIE goods store on the John B. Keane road. Stone walling extending from St Michael's Graveyard to the GAA grounds (including new gates) is also commendable. The redevelopment at Mill Lane of the Revenue Commissioners' building is pleasing to hear. The provision of bilingual signage is well worthwhile. We look

forward to proposed works, including the old mart yard at Market Street. The fact that the Heritage Town of Listowel has a number of fine plaster shopfronts and that they are now protected structures is commendable. The school was proudly sporting its green flag. The plinth of Arro was somewhat patchy.

Landscaping:

The magnificent limestone pieces on the Square with trees and seating and planting looked very well and some marvellous planters were evident in this location. The John B. Keane Statue at the junction was a new addition since this adjudicator had last visited the town. The John B Keane Mural on Church Street was admired. There is obviously a great sense of pride in this the town's favourite son! Sculptures on approach roads and their associated planting were admired. The archway entrance to the riverside area is very elegant and the magnificent green spaces over the river with the magnificent view of the arched bridge, picnic area with rose beds incorporating the old hand ball alley were admired. This was painted up to a certain height and this has worked successfully. The Garden of Europe is also incorporated in this area. The town park also looked well and the hanging baskets on the bridge were admired. The floral display competition is a good idea and the planting of montbretia (native to the area) opposite the new Aldi is a lovely idea. New tree planting at the square is good-do ensure they are native varieties. The sculpture dedicated to the town's most famous son, John B. Keane, is a fine addition in the Garden of Europe. We were pleased to hear of the resurfacing at Teampallin Ban in order to make it wheelchair accessible. Further developments here, and indeed in other areas of the town are welcome ones. Upgrading of the Town Park is commendable and we look forward to the new playground area. The wicker sculptures at the entrance to the golf club are marvellous and unusual landscape features.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The development of the riverside walk sounds like an interesting idea, in particular its standing as a conservation area at Castle Inch and the planting of native trees. The bird nesting boxes at the Town Park and the schools are a good development and the upkeep of the salmon nesting pools is commendable. We look forward to future developments in this category of the competition, including the wildlife study and associated information boards.

Litter Control:

There were one or two papers along the main streets but not too many, the laneway to Gala was quite littered. We were pleased to hear of your participation in the National Spring Clean. The ongoing litter rota is a good idea. Anti – dog fouling signs are also a good idea. The Town Council litter surveys are useful tools for identifying problem areas. The use of the road sweeper must make a real difference to your work. The children's competitions are a wonderful idea. We look forward to seeing the success of the gum blasting machine. We were intrigued to hear of the litter wardens plans in regard to this problem! Good luck with efforts regarding cigarette butts. Have you considered cigarette butt receptacles outside of the pubs? Some towns have found this most effective.

Waste Minimisation:

We were pleased to hear of the visit by the Environmental Officer from Kerry County Council and leaflet on waste minimisation was read with interest. The schools' participation in the Green Schools programme is commendable, and the segregation of litter from the annual clean up is commendable. Businesses seem to be taking on board this issue, to judge from Garvey's recycling record and the recycling of ink cartridges at the credit union. The seminars on waste management and composting sound like excellent initiatives.

Tidiness:

There were a few weeds at kerbsides on the bridge but generally the standard in this category was good. The control of weed growth is commendable – do ensure that you use environmentally friendly products. We were pleased to hear of a campaign to tackle graffiti black spots. We were pleased to hear that fly-posting is banned under the litter law. There were a number of yard areas which should be screened from public view.

Residential Areas:

New trees had been planted at the Ashcroft Estate. Clareville B&B has some magnificent planting. A new entranceway to an estate with an archway on the Limerick Road was admired. Cluain Doire sported some attractive montbretia and new trees at its entranceway. The creeper-clad house on the Square was greatly admired. Ongoing maintenance of landscaped areas of estates is commendable. The Best Kept Estates, Best Kept Garden and Best Presentation of Container Planting competitions are a good idea. We are pleased to note that you encourage and offer advice and support to the formation of resident's associations. The fact that many estates have bi-lingual signage is commendable. We were pleased to hear of the tree planting programme at Feale Drive and Ashgrove. We were also pleased to read of traffic calming measures in estate areas which will hopefully make it safer for pedestrians in these areas.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Verges were well maintained on the Limerick Road although the odd weed was apparent. The Killarney Road is an attractive one with overhanging mature trees and good stonework walls. There appeared to be a new footpath in this location. It's a long lead into the town and the welcome sign was slightly obscured by overgrowth. The hedging at the Kerry Group was admired but it was wondered if more trees could be planted in this location? Montbretia had been planted along the blockwork wall of the John B Keane Road and this must be magnificent when it comes into full bloom. The roundabouts were well maintained. The marvellous limestone kerbs and trims along the streets of the town were admired and their retention is commendable. We were pleased to read of re surfacing and lighting improvements in the town. Improvements to signage and road signage is also welcomed. We look forward to upgrading of Listowel Bridge and further developments in this vicinity.

General Impression:

It is always a pleasure to visit Listowel which is a busy working town. It continues to perform well in the competition and maintains its unique charm and character.

Second Round Adjudication:

This being the the 50th anniversary of the TidyTown competition, this adjudicator - who does not go back 50 years! but has adjudicated from time to time over fifteen - felt it might be interesting and instructive to look back over some of the developments and changes that have taken place over the latter period. These changes, with their consequent rise in marking, may have seemed slow to the people involved, but to the outsider they appear quite as rapid as they are remarkable. It takes time to get new projects moving. The "fix it" concept is an effective one and seems to be quite unique among committees: but do not feel that you are obliged to take up what one of the judges recommends. The local competitions for gardens, estates, containers, etc, certainly encourage community-wide participation as well as helping to enhance the town. On the negative side, the Mart is still an unfortunately blighted area near the town centre; and there is a surprisingly unkempt area near the bridge entrance to the Park and sports fields. As the first adjudicator mentioned, it is a real mistake to replace timber-framed windows with uPVC on traditional buildings, particularly on as notable a facade at the Maid of Erin house. Most of McAuliffe's work survives in Listowel and obviously it is something that must be carefully treasured - but so should the houses that the plasterwork adorns. Surfacing of the street to the bridge was poor. Has the dreaded subject of a by-pass been considered? - if so it may be controversial, yet it is difficult to appreciate the very real charms of the town when there is endless through traffic, something which these streets were never designed for. Positive comments, however, far outweigh the negative. Perhaps surprising to many who follow the route from town to town assessing their virtues and (less often nowadays) their discrepancies, is the absence of ugly poles and overhead wires, and their replacement with elegant lamp-standards: this change has made an enormous change for the better to the visual aspect of the Listowel streetscapes. The frontage of Kerry Foods has certainly improved over the years; the Golf Club with its imaginative wicker sculptures is another fairly recent contribution that helps to add up the number of imaginatively designed locations. Perhaps the greatest is the Garden Of Europe, such a tranquil place and so tastefully planted; Tarrant's John B Keane sculpture is the most dynamic piece of 21st century memorial sculpture that this adjudicator has yet seen anywhere, and it is superbly well suited to this site. (Incidentally, the highway named for the same writer is a most useful and well-organised relief-road.) The civic amenity surrounding what used to be a rather grubby Court House is now a dignified urban space with the handsome library and fire-station amid attractive planting. Another area that now evokes pride rather than neglect is the Castle following its sensitive rehabilitation and with its hard and soft landscaping, the ensemble now making an important and eye-catching architectural statement in the centre of the town. The Castle Inch riverside path not only provides a splendid amenity for walkers, but also a fine locality for the contemplation of nature so close to the centre of population and, with its young willows, alders, ash, sycamore, copper-beech, etc, supplying further food and shelter for wild life. These are only some of the comparatively recent projects, and the major and minor changes of the past few years, which the second adjudicator noted very favourably indeed, and which afforded much pleasure and admiration. Thanks and congratulations to the people of the town and best wishes for the next half-century.