

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Ardclough** Ref: **353**
County: **Kildare** Mark: **238**
Category: **B** Date(s): **07/07/2008**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	30
The Built Environment	50	32
Landscaping	50	34
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	25
Litter Control	50	23
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	29
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	33
General Impression	10	7
TOTAL MARK	400	238

Overall Development Approach:

Go raibh maith agaibh go leir! Thank you to Ardclough TidyTowns and to the community you represent for having given selflessly of your time in working towards entering Ardclough in this 50th anniversary year of the TidyTowns Competition!

Ardclough is a small village with a large number of people involved on your committee. Well Done! You do not state how many members you represent. It must be a sizeable number, as the committee representing you is large! It is a little unclear whether the TidyTowns committee is actually the Community Council committee, and that the Community Council is the umbrella group for the TidyTowns group. This would appear to be the case in reading your "Overall Development Approach." So many people bring strengths and insights to any organisation. You increase your activity from once a week meetings in winter to weekly work tasks in the summer. The Community Council link helps to make links with many other organisations in the village and surrounds.

Your local authority has come to your assistance with CAAS in drawing up the Plan for Ardclough TidyTowns. Thank you for submitting this plan. This will help you to focus your activities and to plan in advance. You are grateful for assistance received also from other agencies, including your local G.A.A. club, which has such a central on-the-ground location in your village, as well acknowledging An Taisce and Muintir na Tire's help. It is a pity that you did not detail the consultation process involved in drawing up your Plan. We assume that you held public meetings in this regard, but this is not clear at all from your submission, nor is it clear from the plan itself. We assume that you have by now launched your plan. We hope that it was well received. You have listed projects for 2008 and 2009 only, with the rest included as "ongoing", presumably 2008-2013

We are also glad that you are going to meet with the Heritage and Conservation Officers and the area engineer in your local authority. We assume that you will also make arrangements to meet with the

Environment Section officers.

KELT has a good track record in advising and assisting other groups in your area. We wish you well in your meetings with them.

The idea of road representatives is an excellent one, and obviously you have reliable people in all areas. As well as using the modern means of communication such as emails and texts/mobiles, you also use traditional means such as the church and local shop. We hope that your church notices go to any other churches in the locality where your residents might also be parishioners.

You are brave to hold three or four public meetings per year. Public meetings are quite a challenge! We assume that these are specifically Community Council meetings which also discuss Tidy Towns, rather than solely Tidy Towns public meetings.

It is good to have a Green Schools coordinator in the local school. Well done on taking part in the Spring clean.

Thank you for submitting a clear O.S. map in your plan. You might also extend its boundaries to include the area outside the immediate village boundaries, especially in relation to mentioned items in the verbal submissions. Perhaps you could differentiate 5 year objectives from 2008 /2009 objectives on maps also.

The Built Environment:

Ardclough is a lovely village close to the banks of the Canal.

Your built heritage in the area is very interesting, and is a source of educational, amenity, and educational potential. This heritage is situated in its natural surrounds and has not been encroached upon. We know that you appreciate this aspect of your built heritage well. You also have modern heritage in the lovely and interesting church, which is an interesting building at a focal point in the village.

The Canal and its associated banks, bridges and locks/lockhouses are very important in a national sense, and you have a great stretch of the Grand Canal on your doorstep.

The bridge on the Southern approach is very beautiful, with its dating medallion. It also has good stone splays. However we would have some concern for the repairs carried out. These should be finely carried out in lime mortar.

"Rabbit" wire is also attached to the North Eastern side of the bridge.

The railway bridge on the Tipperstown road entrance is also very beautiful. You have a wealth of built heritage associated with transport. The gate which you have photographed at the entrance to the railway is very unusual, but it also has a good simpler gate beside it. These gates, together with the gate of the adjacent house, are a good amalgam of ironwork in a small area. The stone walls here in this area and throughout your village area are also a great asset in your built heritage. The lock gates area is also of interest. We look forward to the on-site interpretation of this heritage.

We would very much recommend that you do not attach lights to the bridge as it is a historic structure, needing no embellishment, and certainly not the so called "heritage" lights which are not at all part of an Irish village's heritage! Attaching such items to what is a protected structure can also cause harm to the fabric of the structure. You should consult with the Conservation officer about this. Some type of external lighting may be appropriate, but you must ensure that this does not interfere with the wildlife, e.g. bats.

The demesne walls of the Lyons estate along the canal banks are another asset, as is the entrance to the estate just before the pedestrianised part of the canal walk. The belfry/clock tower is also visible from the canal walk, and it too is another interesting heritage structure. The copper has become stained and there are poles/wires beside it which detract a little. The newer stone walls further along the walk toward the lock gate, and the buildings behind are also good, with their lime green paint contrasting nicely with the stone. However the security fencing in front of the stone wall along the canal bank for a length looks poorly in such an otherwise natural environment.

The old Irish inscription on the Daniel Graham Memorial Park stone entrance is good, located in the stone wall. The walls here and at the school preserve the tradition of stone walling. Bonding traditionally would have been of stone mortar, not cement. It would be good if you could organise this for the future.

The pump near the railway is simply presented. The wall to the rear could be evened off, and the great linear pothole in front repaired! We note that you have plans for this area.

Is the house boat part of the Built Environment, we wonder? It looked well cared for and colourful on the Canal!

The former schoolhouse and church have been restored. It is good to see them getting a new use.

With regard to street furniture, architectural opinion should be sought from your local architects' department if possible. Again dutifully avoid the "heritage" theme, as it is not appropriate to the Irish village. Remember that street furniture should not be black in colour, as this is the most difficult colour for visually impaired people to see.

We look forward to seeing more bilingual signage.

Landscaping:

Ardclough has a distinct natural advantage in the fact that it is a village located in an unspoilt area almost on the banks of the Grand Canal and just off the Grand Canal Way. Despite its proximity to the more urbanised parts of the county, the village has really retained its rural ambience through the maintenance of dry stone walls and hedgerows, together with its waterside amenities, and Lyons estate parkland planting. The vegetation is native and unspoilt. The tree cover is of mainly native deciduous species. Maybe a Sli na Slainte route could be developed in the environs of Ardclough. You have this in mind in your plan.

Your own landscaping of the village area, especially in the area of the church, internal and external to its grounds, is very appropriate to the village. We are particularly impressed that you are not overusing the more urban landscape forms of baskets and tubs. You do not need these in such a natural setting. Well Done! The shrubbery in the small village green area opposite the church at the entry to the village is very attractive. The approaches to the village all have either stone or natural hedging boundaries. These are excellent. The canal banks are a riot of grass cover and wild flowers with yellow water lilies on the surface of the canal. These are particularly attractive. The area on the canal side of the G.A.A. pitches is full of mature deciduous plantings. You plan to landscape two areas near the bridge. Ensure that this is with planting species already native to canal locations.

You have a good maintenance programme laid out in your plan. The community garden at Wheatfield is another lovely landscaped area. It is noted that you intend increasing the range of plants with native species. We compliment you on your proposal to organise a garden competition. We suggest that you take advice on how best to encourage the individual gardeners to be simple and not over fussy. Sometime competitiveness can lead to excess!

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Ardclough with its deciduous woodland, canal world, and distance from polluting atmospheres and human disturbance is a wildlife habitat supreme! You must build on this and maximise your efforts in order to progress in this area.

The trees of the deciduous woodland and the hedgerows all around are a wildlife lovers' dream. The canal is a particularly unique and special environment and you are aware of this. You rightly are considering best management practices for its edges and banks.

We look forward to seeing many bird boxes produced at the school, and perhaps bat boxes too. The canal must be a veritable bat paradise, given its rich insect life, and its potential bridge bat roosts. You have a good awareness re berry bearing vegetation planting. You recognise the importance of stone walls for certain plant species also.

A logical place to start, and you propose doing this is, would be to carry out a very basic survey of wild flora and fauna in the area. Perhaps your local school could help you with this? Do you have a young person studying Environmental Science in a 3rd level institution from the area who might require a thesis topic? The provision of a survey and management plan contributes to the marks in this section. In last year's adjudication it was also recommended that you might consider erecting an interpretative panel, so do remember to endeavour to do this for 2009! Findings made public on information panels would add to the enjoyment of your village for local and visitors alike, and would serve good educational purposes. You discuss approaching the Heritage Council for funding, but you can start locally yourselves. Rural dwellers often have a great knowledge of the wildflowers and birdlife. Consult with your community council.

Litter Control:

There was some litter on adjudication day at the foot of the bridge on the North Eastern side. There was also some litter on the ground amongst the bushes at the entrance to the Lyons Estate from the canal side road nearest the bridge. Neither of these were major litterings, but nonetheless they were observed.

You have worked towards litter control as a community council in association with the school in 2008, and

hopefully continue to do so. We are not sure if your litter picking extends at present to the two areas mentioned above as you refer to litter picking in the vicinity of the village. You have participated in the Spring Clean event, and plan on continuing to do so. Well Done! Perhaps you could organise a Litter Seminar with the Litter Warden of your local authority

Waste Minimisation:

You are segregating litter and recycling where possible. Do you know what per cent is recycled in the village? How far do you have to travel to do this, and what arrangements are made for people who do not have transport? We hope that you will get your recycling area. Well done on the composting initiatives proposed.

Waste minimisation is about more than not having litter in your street. It involves the prevention of litter accumulation in the first case. It is really what it says – to minimise on waste production before we, as a community, private or public create it in the first case. You might refer to the Race Against Waste booklet available from the Tidy Towns Unit of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, and Local Government. Consider organising or attending a Waste Minimisation Workshop with your local authority. In your local school there will be opportunities to involve the students in an effort to work towards this end.

Perhaps you might prepare a flyer/newsletter on this subject? As a local community you could look at some innovative and simple ideas such as organising a “Bring and Take Day”. This would involve using a local hall / community centre for instance for a day - where everybody brings items they have no further use for, but which other people might want (and which under normal circumstances they might get rid of as waste) and puts them on display. The corollary is that somebody else needs these items. No monies change hands. Website versions of this idea have been set up in places also. Another group collected all broken crockery, and made a mosaic in their local area. You can gain marks by doing some of these things for 2009.

Tidiness:

In general the village and its surroundings were very tidy.

Unfortunately a local political party candidate had not removed the Lisbon Treaty poster from the pole at the bridge several weeks after the event. A second poster from lower down the same pole had obviously been torn off carelessly, and parts of it remained untidily. It is not known what the second poster was for, as only backing remained torn in situ.

The signs erected on the canal bank were roughly stuck in concrete which looked out of keeping with their surrounds. The bent signs referred to in Roads etc. section below also took marginally from the overall tidiness of the approaches

A road traffic sign had fallen/was dumped/vandalised (?) and was in the canal at the Northern side of the bridge on adjudication day. The two golf competition signs, whilst temporary at the G.A.A. and shop on adjudication day, whereas advertising a local worthwhile event, looked somewhat untidy and amateurish. Could a village noticeboard be erected in a safe place?

Footpaths and verges as well as stone walls and hedgerows were well cared for, and the public buildings - church and school were exemplary.

There was no graffiti in evidence. This is good. You say in your plan that you will remove this as it arises. This is the best approach.

Residential Areas:

The individual inhabited houses in the village and the newer developments are generally well maintained and landscaped. Wheatfield Lower estate is exemplary and has a wonderful backdrop of the adjacent G.A.A. pitch with its mature treescape behind. The estate also had, on adjudication day a lovely freshly mown open space, seating, litter bins, and flower tubs. It is a credit to all concerned. The community garden is a good idea and is well respected.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Straffan Road / Tipperstown Road has a name sign which appears to have got a “hit” The old ruined cottage at the turn in the road, as one approaches the village has been dealt with in an attractive fashion with a brightly painted red door. The flowers and bicycle were admired.

The Celbridge Road approach has an attractive metal sign, unfortunately again a little bent, is set in flowers.

The bridge barriers are not attractive.

On the village side of the bridge is a row of individual houses. All the houses have grass frontages which were all well mown. A stream flows along the frontage and is only culverted at the entrance areas. There is a nicely cut verge opposite this stream also, with good hedging along this southern side of this approach also.

Lishandra Manor is a gated estate. There are lovely semi-mature trees along the edge of the footpath/road in this location also. This entrance to the village has good stone walls, trees and grassed areas.

The approach over the canal bridge is attractive as one descends from the extreme vertical alignment of the bridge. Some poles and wires are in evidence in views inward towards the village. Otherwise the village nestles in the canal neighbourhood.

General Impression:

Ardclough has a great natural advantage of location and history. We know that you are aware of this richness. The Plan is your blueprint. However a lot of what is proposed is as yet aspirational, as the plan only starts in 2008. Good luck with all your ventures! We realise that you are only recently in the competition, but you are approaching the tasks ahead in an organised manner. We also feel that there is a good community spirit to build upon, and a lot of what makes for success is on-the-ground work. You are shown by the current condition of the village to be hard workers, ever before you put your thoughts on paper! We would encourage you to continue to seek the excellent advice which is available to you from your local authority on many issues – be it Conservation, Heritage, Environmental issues and others. You will also have the new residents to help you and to bring new ideas and manpower to your ranks.