

Tidy Towns Competition 2008

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Aughrim** Ref: **257**
County: **Wicklow** Mark: **300**
Category: **C** Date(s): **08/06/2008**
17/07/2008

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2008
Overall Development Approach	50	46
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	40
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	29
Litter Control	50	36
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	25
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	37
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	300

Overall Development Approach:

Hello Aughrim! Firstly, a huge congratulations on your achievements of 2007. Thank you for your comprehensive development plan which, yet again stipulates the core objectives of your Committee. It is encouraging to note that you are not complacent about your achievements to date and that your intention is 'to improve the position of the town in the TidyTowns Competition'. Your committee of twenty is commended on their co-operation with a number of agencies which undoubtedly has played a crucial role in your success to date. 'Quality of life' is an intrinsic part of your work and this is commendable. In order to sustain high marks in this section you need to provide a detailed map of the town, including projects for 2008. At this level in the competition you should be providing a much more detailed map. In addition to this the inclusion of 'before' and 'after' pictures is always helpful to an adjudicator when trying to allocate marks.

The Built Environment:

The incidental use of granite has a cohesive effect on the presentation of the built environment of Aughrim. The Market House as ever is striking. Premises that were particularly admired were the Barber's Shop, Paddy Phelans and the Credit Union. The Library looked fresh in green and cream and in the same area the Garda Station looked great - a welcoming gnome was a pleasant feature. The School as ever is immaculately presented with a wonderful flower-bed surrounding three standing stones. Neatly presented signage at the Forge and Sean Lenihan walk was noted favourably. Work at the Pavillion was ongoing on the day of adjudication and is in fitting with the existing structure - we look forward to its completion. The TidyTowns yard was noted. You mention in your application from that a playground will be developed in 2008 - this project did not appear to have been started by the day of (first) adjudication.

Landscaping:

It is in this area the Aughrim excels. There are so many hidden gems that emerge from every approach and

each one is maintained to an exceptionally high standard. Clearly the waterside amenity at the Pavilion with its bowling green is the showpiece. Its presentation is astounding especially given the high volumes of visitors as was evident on the day of adjudication. Similarly the picnic area at the bridge, the Forge and the pretty walkway opposite the National School. Extensive rose beds were admired in the village and the numerous trailing hanging baskets added a welcome splash of colour. Incidental planters throughout the streetscape are also used to great effect. The new flower bed on the main road had been prepared but not yet planted as the adjudicator passed but will no doubt be in a league of its own by the time the second adjudicator visits. Similarly a number of beds had been prepared for planting at Pinewood Grove. Remnants of spring bulbs were evident here and there and you are commended for this.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Aughrim is in the enviable positions of being ensconced amid the Wicklow foothills with the clearest brook flowing through. The Séan Linehan is a wonderful rural amenity and you indicate ongoing developments are planned here in the coming years. On the other side of the village the waterside amenity in the park was busy with anglers as the adjudicator strolled through and its presentation is impeccable.

Litter Control:

Litter control was very good in Aughrim on the day of adjudication. A couple of glass bottles were noticed on the Main Street, no doubt deposited by late night revellers. An odd small piece was noted here and there and a couple of empty cigarette packets too. However, the residential area at Chaple Lane had quite a scattering of litter and this was a pity. Your ongoing litter patrols involving the entire community is yet again commended. It is clear that the school children in Aughrim play an important part in the implementation and publicising of your litter control plan.

Waste Minimisation:

You clearly have a strong waste minimisation ethic in Aughrim. The neatly presented bring-bank was noted. Your thrift shop appears to be thriving and the commitment of the volunteers, in particular, is lauded. It is refreshing to note that the entire community is benefiting from the shredder and indeed that even the grass cuttings are being disposed of in an eco-friendly manner. Your committee should consider holding a public information workshop/seminar to increase marks further in this section.

Tidiness:

The ongoing work on the Arklow road is commended and we look forward to the completion of the project. Kerbside weeds in Millbrook detract from an otherwise tidy appearance with neat wooden fencing and attractive lampposts. The remnant of an old cottage is an unfortunate sight at Trident Homes and would easily be improved by whitewashing and perhaps a couple of window boxes. The back laneway to the Forge Amenity looked great. Property owners are reminded that the rear aspect of properties should be painted. A broken wall and graffiti were noted in the environs of Chaple Lane.

Residential Areas:

Millwood looked fresh in the early morning sunshine and the grass has recently been cut on the green. The semi-detached row of lemon dwellings were admired at Trident Homes. The green here was immaculate and the grass cuttings were cleverly screened off beside the copse. As ever many of the houses in Lourdes Crescent looked wonderful. Outstanding, of course was 'Heather Glen' as mentioned by last year's adjudicator. Aughrim Hall was admired for its most spectacular landscaping. Derry Bawn is maturing well, however, the boundary walls had yet to be painted. The new fence at Riverside is a great asset.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The streets and paths throughout the central part of Aughrim, as ever are of a high standard. Similarly, the presentation of the Arklow road is most impressive and clearly has recently been resurfaced and marked. Neat kerbing was in place edging a prepared soil bank. Work was ongoing on the new lighting on the day of adjudication and the new stone wall adds to the character of this busy road. Evenly spaced mounds of earth topped by snow white road markers were noted. The road surface on the L6699 was a little uneven in places but otherwise was well presented. Two attractive wooden gates were spotted as was a grassy verge which was a little overgrown. The Tinahely approach was a little disappointing and the sign indicating your various successes in this competition was partially blocked.

General Impression:

This adjudicator has been looking forward to the opportunity of adjudicating the most recent winner of the Tidy Towns Competition and she was not disappointed. Aughrim is a glorious haven tucked away in the Wicklow foothills and will no doubt be a serious contender in this competition for many years to come.

Second Round Adjudication:

It was a pleasure for your 2nd Round adjudicator to visit Aughrim following on your great achievement as national TidyTowns winner in 2007. This level of national performance is difficult to sustain but on arrival in the village this adjudicator could see immediacy that you have not reduced your community commitment to TidyTowns this year. This adjudicator must agree with the 1st Round adjudicator's comments in regard to the map supplied with your entry. This was not of the standard expected from a national winner. Buildings are very well presented in Aughrim and many stand out for various reasons; generally either for their architectural qualities, or the provision of landscaping. The Irish National Foresters building roof was being power washed on the day of this visit and the building and road boundary wall will need to be painted for 2009. The colourful and detailed Information panel near the Forge was examined and this is beautifully presented and the drawings and photographs add much to the overall effect here.

Landscaping again this year is one of the key characteristics of Aughrim and the many small colourful landscaped areas tend to tie the village together in visual terms and that is important. However as you work towards future landscaping plans do make sure that you do not lose sight of the fact that Aughrim is a beautifully located rural village and that artificial landscaping sometimes has its limits. Such landscaping must never dominate the building or buildings with which it is associated. Year round colour and texture is also very important. Some half timber barrels were noted in various locations and some of these needed to be painted. The new flower bed on the main road had been planted by 2nd Round adjudication and this long bed looked extremely colourful. Landscaping at estate entrances was really eye catching and the beautiful Bowling Green and lake area was superbly presented.

In many stone walls the naturally occurring plants and mosses were admired and it is so important that these walls are retained or replaced following any essential removal to facilitate development. At the Garda Station the small water feature using natural stone is an attractive feature and adds a new texture to that part of the village.

In terms of litter control some problem areas were noted during this adjudication visit. A little litter was noted on the Woodfab road approach road, at the gates to Aughrim Mills and just a few pieces were present in the laneway running parallel to the Main Street. In the small amenity area at the gable wall of the Library a few pieces of litter were present. At the Bring Centre the signage needed to be washed.

In terms of tidiness a few areas were noted that needed some attention. At the beautiful amenity area at the bridge the Dog Notice had some graffiti and several of the 'Aughrim' signs on approach roads needed to be repainted. Along the main road from the bridge one instance of graffiti was noted on the roadside concrete block wall at the GAA Stand. At the entrance to the car park used by anglers the paintwork on the gates needed to be touched up and the curved railing at the viewing area here was showing some signs of rust along the bottom. On the Avoca approach a long timber roadside fence needed to be painted or otherwise treated.

Housing estates in Aughrim were well presented and good landscaping is a strong aspect of them all. Towards the end of the laneway parallel to the Main Street a yellow gable wall needed to be painted. At some of the estates the Granite name signs were much admired.

Good luck with your projects for 2009 when we look forward to visiting you again.