

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Carlow** Ref: **36**
County: **Carlow** Mark: **284**
Category: **G** Date(s): **27/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	46
The Built Environment	50	42
Landscaping	50	43
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	28
Waste Minimisation	20	8
Tidiness	30	15
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	284

Overall Development Approach:

The adjudicator would like to welcome Carlow to the 2009 TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for the completed entry documentation and the literature pack, both of which were much appreciated. A lot of work obviously went into the preparation of the bound document supplied. At times, the adjudicator had difficulty working out from this regarding what work was actually new for 2009 and what was a statement of what the town had to offer in various adjudication categories. Long submissions on individual projects such as the proposed County Museum are most interesting, but not essential for the adjudication process. The detailed map was most useful, but did not mark any of your new projects for 2009. The adjudicator wondered if a new road or roads in the general Ashgrove (south-east) part of the town were not shown on this map. The length of documentation submitted is not a determining factor in marks allocation under this adjudication category. These are not criticisms, but merely suggestions on how you can improve even further your entry documentation in the coming years.

The various local competitions, obviously, play a vital role in TidyTowns in Carlow and the fact that this involves 145 entries is amazing. Your relatively small committee of 13 people has a heavy annual schedule of meetings. It was most encouraging to read that the Town Council is so involved in the TidyTowns process and their help is important. Spring Clean month plays a large part in your annual programme. The level of sponsorship appears to be high and the close involvement of the Schools is critically important. Your communication with the Carlow community appears to be very good.

The Built Environment:

The new Arts Center building is unusual in design and, at first sight from a distance, could be seen as a structure that does not sit well with its local built environment. However, closer examination reveals a modern, possibly cubist inspired building, that does indeed compliment, the more traditional, and older buildings

nearby. The adjudicator also admired how the recently planted young trees work well in visual terms with the white / grey building backdrop. The stone gabions, as design features, were also admired here. The County Museum building, off Tullow Street at the Cathedral, was examined. This will be a great town centre site for the Museum and this adjudicator is really looking forward to visiting this Museum in the future. The Askea Parish Community Centre stood out as a building that appeared to be freshly painted and was extremely well presented. The area around the Hanover Shopping Centre was admired as was the Institute of Technology, that is so well placed within a heavily landscaped area. A Granite building, at the corner of Leighlin Road beside St Claire's Church, was admired but seemed to be derelict. Work on the new Plaza on College Street was in progress on the day of the visit and on completion this should be a most attractive area. Like most previous adjudicators, this adjudicator was highly impressed with the superb Courthouse, but the high railings around the building needed to be repainted. The Cigar Divan, as an older shop front, caught the eye and the original iron work detailing is very attractive as are the curved windows. At the Potato Market, the wide cobbled footpaths give character to this area, though some littering was present in the raised stone tree containers. Along on Castle Street, the façade of Allen & Sons is excellently presented and the graphics here were much admired. The new Floating Mooring facility was examined and this is a great addition to river facilities.

Landscaping:

The increase in the cast iron flower display stands together with the Local Floral Pride Competition was observed as an excellent initiative. A feature of Carlow is that flowers and planting seem to be evident on nearly every street in the town. Landscaping at the 'Welcome to Carlow' signs helps to form a good first impression of the town. Hanging baskets have been used throughout to excellent visual effect. The baskets on the Burrin Road railings were eye catching but the railings here need to be repainted. Opposite the Post Office, which this adjudicator does not praise in design terms, the colourful low landscaping was most eye catching. Additional visual attraction is provided by the high fountain near the Dinn Ri Hotel. Along the railing on Kennedy Avenue, beside the stream, further flower displays showed off this attractive area to advantage. The black bollards here need to be repainted and some litter was noted upstream of the pedestrian bridge. Dumping in the river was evident at the nearby road bridge opposite Riverbank Apartments.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The Rowing Club area was mentioned in the entry form under projects for this year, but this adjudicator is of the view the wildlife panel here may have been provided in previous years. This has not affected the marks allocated here. There did not appear to be any other new projects for Carlow for 2009 under this adjudication category. The projects identified here for the future are most interesting and hopefully they will make progress for next year. The Oak Forest Park is a great local amenity for Carlow people and visitors.

Litter Control:

The strict street cleaning schedule, mentioned in the entry documentation, is commended but it did not appear to be producing consistent results on adjudication day. The anti-litter Road Show is a great Local Authority initiative and one which this adjudicator has not come across before. The replacement of older style litter bins by cast iron bins is warmly welcomed as is the imaginative Litter Action League. The Bring Centre, off Potterton Road, was in a poor condition with much dumping evident. The timber fencing here needed to be repaired. The Bring Centre at Paupish Road appears to have been removed, though the signage is still in place. A little dumping was also evident at The Green Road Bring Centre, though the attractive landscaping here was admired at the road junction. Much litter was noted at the Graiguecullen sign, near one of the roundabouts. Regrettably, quite a lot of litter was evident in the, otherwise beautiful, Town Park in many locations. This adjudicator entered from the Sleaty Street side and litter was evident in the car park here. Bad littering was evident at the attractive pedestrian bridge and what appeared to be 'aged' litter. Litter occurred again near the floating jetty area. Along Dublin Street litter was also evident. The adjudicator is aware of the IBAL Report that placed Carlow 3rd of 60 towns in terms of litter control and well done on that achievement. However, the TidyTowns adjudicator must report the situation as seen on adjudication day and not what the adjudicator would wish to have seen. The discussions with the GAA on litter control issues demonstrated great preventative and proactive thinking, and should be followed by other towns in Ireland. The letter on litter to traders is another great example of litter control initiative. The number of litter fines issued since 2001 at approximately 1,438 contrasts with an indicated 545 fines actually paid. Why were approximately 62% of fines unpaid since 2001 based on the figures supplied?

Waste Minimisation:

The Hermantown Recycling Centre was well presented and seems to be a well used facility. Congratulations to the Schools who are making such great progress on the Green Flag Programme. Two of them are on their 4th Green Flag Programme and that is highly commended. The Recycling Bin Provision Programme sponsored by TidyTowns is imaginative; how many bins were provided this year?

Tidiness:

The Anti-Graffiti Reduction Programme is a great worthwhile undertaking. Beside the Pratt's car showroom, the new boarded up building needed to be screened from view. Likewise, at the Hacketstown Road Roundabout, a very large faded advertising sign needed maintenance attention. Graffiti on walls was present in the Paupish Road area near the Nursery School. Further graffiti was noted on the wall of the Carlow Windscreen Centre. At the Carlow retail Park, off the N9, the long blue timber screening needed to be repainted. On Burrin Street, the black railings here would be improved if repainted. The ESB Sub Station on the Killeshin Road looked rather untidy and perhaps, some screening can be done here. Likewise timber screening, near the entrance to Governey Park, on the Sleaty Road needed to be repainted.

Residential Areas:

Quite a number of estates in Carlow were visited, both public and private, and the Amenity Grant Scheme had done great work in some of them. Of all the estates visited, Roncalli Place was highly impressive. All the houses here appear to have made great efforts in landscaping. In addition, the larger area at the entrance is superbly presented. This estate should be a future benchmark for how all estates should be presented. The local pride in Roncalli Place is out of question. The use of strong paint colours on Potterton Road was admired, while the planting at the entrance to St Patrick's Terrace needed a slight weeding. Very good grass areas at Ashgrove stood out. The effect of the fine lines of trees at Anglers Walk was compromised by very bad litter control. At quite a number of estate entrances name signage appeared to be missing or at least not obvious to the motorist or visitor. Weed growth at kerbs was a problem noted in quite a few estates.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

Under this adjudication category, the adjudicator drove over 24 Kms in examination. New car parks and improvements to some back lanes were noted. In general, all if not all roundabouts are excellently landscaped and create such a great first impression of Carlow. The main roads, likewise, impressed and mature trees in many cases were much admired. In the town centre some road resurfacing is now overdue.

General Impression:

It was a pleasure to visit Carlow on a warm June day. Congratulations on your achievements to date and good luck with your projects for next year.