

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Coolagown** Ref: **649**
County: **Cork(North)** Mark: **301**
Category: **A** Date(s): **26/06/2009**
24/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	44
The Built Environment	50	33
Landscaping	50	42
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	40
Litter Control	50	40
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	20
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	9
TOTAL MARK	400	301

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for entering the competition, and thank you also for all the support material. You have a good size committee of 30 people. There is great leadership shown when you can get a large number of people to do voluntary work, and I note that local farmers are always willing to help out. You are getting support from a number of agencies namely Fás, Cork County Council, Blackwater Resource Development, National Parks and Wildlife Section of The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, ESB and Coillte. The fortnightly newsletter is a good way of communicating with the local people. We are pleased to learn that you find the competition to be a worthwhile exercise. It is rewarding, as you do, to have a working relationship with the local school. All of this means you have an excellent approach to the competition.

The Built Environment:

O B's is the first business house that I met coming in from Conna and it was neatly presented, and adorned with summer flowers in hanging baskets and tubs, and a colourful rose bed was across the lane from it. A feature throughout the village is the horse shoe, notably on gates and on great T supports for hanging baskets, reminding the travellers of the equine connection to the area. The church is presented in immaculate condition, with above ordinary attention to tidiness, landscaping, floral displays and a great newly painted railing with a smart garden seat outside, and congratulations to all concerned with its upkeep. I admired Kilmagner School and I note they are pursuing the green flag status. I loved the sculptures of a blacksmith at work on the anvil at his forge with all the equipment, and the splendour of this area would rival any other similar structure in Ireland. The forge in Ireland was a landmark and it has now almost disappeared, but to see it reproduced so well is a testament to a bygone and indeed romantic age. McDonnell Bros have extensive stores, offices and factory buildings, but all the activity here is very well screened off with magnificent trees and shrubs, and congratulations to them in this regard.

Landscaping:

Your attention to landscaping is recognised as being up to professional standards in many areas around the village. All the different arrangements of flowers, shrubs and hedging; young and old trees are complimented by the hanging baskets in the T standards, and I loved the tubs of flowers and shrubs. The garden seats allow people to sit and relax, and enjoy the surroundings. Then, there are the neatly trimmed grass areas that are broken up at intervals, with neat floral arrangements. As one drives past, they see a distinctive flavour of rural Ireland and an example of what can be achieved with energy and leadership.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

The "Local Biodiversity Plan for Coolagown" October 2008 is the result of a very detailed study of the variety of living things that inhabit the Coolagown area, and I found it to be a most interesting publication. This plan has come with recommendations and advice for local people on how to increase their garden biodiversity potential, and I did read page 34 – wonderful. I was interested in the article on the Barn Owl, as there were some in my home place a few years ago, but they vanished and now I see that their disappearance could be attributed to secondary poisoning, probably from rat poison. But there are many other fascinating topics, and I wonder if this report could be purchased some place? Your attention to detail on Wildlife is extensive outside of this report, and I inspected the log piles, the sundial, the bird boxes, the butterfly habitat at the Lifespace Park. At the water spout, I inspected the habitat for tadpoles and frogs plus the wetland area. I later travelled down to Kilbarray woodland walk and nature reserve, and this is a wonderful amenity area.

Litter Control:

The control of litter was good on the day of adjudication, and only small bits were found at McDonnell's cross and coming into the village from the Conna side. I realise that a committee cannot be working full time on the collection of litter, and judging by the high standards that are generally maintained around the village, I suspect that some of this litter could be discarded by passing transport. The notice boards of how long does litter last give a stark reminder to people of the potential damage they could cause, when disposing of plastic and cans etc.

Waste Minimisation:

It is positive to find that the schools are well on their way to achieving green flag status and we know that the parents, teachers and children are learning best practice on the local environment, composting etc. I see you held seminars on waste minimisation in Coolagown in January and March, which had eminent guest speakers, and you are following up these seminars by running a pilot project, in conjunction with Cork County Council Environmental Education Unit, on the whole idea of Waste Minimisation and Energy Conservation, limited to 22 households. This together with extracts from the Biodiversity plan page 34 means that you have tackled the management and minimisation of waste in a very positive manner.

Tidiness:

It is positive to find that Fly Posting is prohibited in Coolagown. There was a freshness with neatly trimmed hedges and well manicured grass margins. Most places were weed free.

Residential Areas:

The two housing estates, The Paddocks and Cill an Oir are finished to a high degree, with good landscaping and signage in place. The other private housing in Coolagown have some great displays of landscaping, such as flowers, trees, shrubs, hedging and good lawns. These shows, together with the displays of the Tidy Towns Committee, add to the aesthetics of the village.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The green areas make for a clean and fresh appearance to travellers passing by, which are bolstered so well by the other landscaping, such as the large amount of hedgerows. I see the Council have agreed to resurface the long mile road. The road down to Kilbarray Wood needs some attention. The signposting is clean and distinct.

General Impression:

You have put together a very impressive presentation and a follow up visit to the village is interesting, and very informative. As one goes along, there are many well presented notice boards to enjoy such as Glimpses of the Past, The Natural heritage of Coolagown, Facts and Figures on how long does litter last, the details of the forges and blacksmiths, the map of the woodland walks plus lots of others. I visited the graveyard and was delighted to find that you have not turned your backs on the great historical ruins there, which are being

expertly restored. Coolagown is poised to do very well in this competition, but apart from any competition this is a wonderful place to visit and more importantly, a great place to live in. Congratulations.

Second Round Adjudication:

The entry was very comprehensive and thorough. It included a very well presented Local Biodiversity Plan. This is an important piece of work and should form the framework for any and all of your work with regard to conservation and habitat maintenance. The additional information supplied gave some very useful and specific examples of your work. The built environment of Coolagown is very pleasing to the eye. Coolagown Church looked very well indeed and the landscaping here must be praised, as it is outstanding. Landscaping is one of the greatest strengths of the village. The quality of the landscape planting is excellent. The repeated use of the horseshoe motif is very good and gives a great consistency throughout the areas. The quality of the information boards is very high.

The Local Biodiversity Plan is very thorough but easily read. Kilbarry Wood is a wonderful resource and it is great that you have a local 'nature reserve'. Life Space Park is an excellent idea put into practice. Well done on this useful project. With the exception of some litter on the approach roads (and this most likely from through traffic) there was no litter to be seen on day of visit. Coolagown is to be congratulated on its efforts in the waste minimisation category. The provision of equipment to households is a most useful initiative. Weed control was very good. Street 'furniture' such as benches, posts and litterbins were seen to be cleaned and well-painted.

Residential areas were almost all to a high standard. The approach to the village is really lovely from both the main roads. The consistency given by the long greens and the T-planters with the horseshoe motif is highly praiseworthy. This is a lovely little village and a pleasure to visit. A remarkable amount of work is done to keep the village looking so well.