

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Mitchelstown** Ref: **657**
County: **Cork(North)** Mark: **247**
Category: **D** Date(s): **30/06/2009**

| | Maximum Mark | Mark Awarded 2009 |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Overall Development Approach | 50 | 40 |
| The Built Environment | 50 | 35 |
| Landscaping | 50 | 28 |
| Wildlife and Natural Amenities | 50 | 17 |
| Litter Control | 50 | 34 |
| Waste Minimisation | 20 | 12 |
| Tidiness | 30 | 15 |
| Residential Areas | 40 | 28 |
| Roads, Streets and Back Areas | 50 | 30 |
| General Impression | 10 | 8 |
| TOTAL MARK | 400 | 247 |

Overall Development Approach:

Thank you for the typed up entry form, map of the town and back up material. I note you have a committee of 11. Amalgamated Residents Of Mitchelstown Association hold approximately 20 committee meetings annually and this group appear to have a varied agenda and has relationships with a number of other local groups. You are getting support from Cork County Council, Ballyhoura Development Ltd, An Taisce, National Parks and Wildlife Services, Firgrove Hotel and Avondhu Press. It is very positive to keep the local people well informed with your plans and activities. The good contact that you maintain with the local schools is well worthwhile, and it is excellent to find that they have green flag status. We are pleased with your comments that you find that the competition is of enormous benefit to Mitchelstown. The numerous social events are good means for people to interact with different other groups and individuals in the town. All of this means you have a very good overall development approach.

The Built Environment:

Mitchelstown has developed in a very well planned fashion with new developments blending in very well with the older business houses in the town.

A flavour of Mitchelstown is set out in my following examples; St George's Church of Ireland is an attractive historical church in good condition, and it is disappointing to see that the front windows have protective mesh on them, but I assume this is for a very good reason. The Church of Our Lady Conceived Without Sin is maintained in supreme condition and is visually striking. On reading your remarks in the built environment section that the night time view is embellished by flood lighting from the two churches, I can imagine that the view is spectacular, and this was an arduous undertaking, but the rewards are obvious. I admired the schools that are very well presented sporting green flags proudly flying in the wind and I loved the new Bright Spots School. In the main street there is an array of traditional town shops that are doing vibrant business in some excellent old buildings with great traditional shop fronts. The newer supermarkets are very well set out with

plenty parking spaces. The Market Square is expertly developed with attractive paving and it maintains an organised weekly market that takes place every Thursday, however when I was there on a Tuesday a foreign national trader had set up his stall and he had under his tent one of the fine notice boards – Historic Mitchelstown – stories from times past. I admired the John Mandeville statue and this is a great reminder of times past. I next discovered the “Timepiece” and this is most unusual and very educational, well done to the inspired people that put these sculptures in place. Then I admired the William Trevor sculpture which pays due tribute to a brilliant writer. But where is the Limestone Cross? I couldn’t find it and made a few unsuccessful enquiries until eventually a lady proudly pointed it out to me. All these historical objects fit in well to this excellent square and you correctly describe it as the commercial hub of the town. I was interested to learn that one can park free in this square for two hours.

You are adopting a sensible approach to the derelict buildings and I read the article piece from the AVONDHU and well done to the students and MBA. Kingston Square is wonderful.

Landscaping:

There is natural landscaping in most of the surrounding areas of the town with great traditional stone walls especially the one out past St George’s church. The stone walls that I observed are in good sturdy condition, and could I say, with respect, that if repair work is planned for traditional stone walls very careful attention must be given to this work – the original style must be maintained (no fancy pointing) and a special, mostly lime based, mortar is used with little or no cement. Further information on this topic is available from the conservation officer at Cork County Council, and in some cases projects can qualify for conservation grants. There is a great book published by Pat McAfee – Irish Stone Walls – and I recommend it, ISBN 10: 0-86278-478-6.

Neat displays of landscaping were admired in many areas around the town, consisting of flower beds and tubs of shrubs and flowers, but the Georgian Square at Kignston College is a place of considerable interest and a testament to a bygone age, the splendour of which could rival similar developments in Ireland, especially the defining architectural qualities. It was presented in supreme condition with great lawns, shrubberies and mature trees and all of this was bolstered with impressive tubs of very good shrubs. The traditional water pump in this square is a rare object and well done for maintaining it in such great condition. Elsewhere in the town I admired a few traditional water pumps that have their own unique character. Your presentation recommended that St Fanahan’s Well is “well worth a visit if you have a few moments to spare” I took up the offer, but it took more than a few moments, as the pathway goes down a long way and I wondered for a time if I would ever find the actual well, but I did, and I found a sacred well with a distinctive flavour. This to me is landscaping at its brilliant best with a supreme view along the well kept path and great mature trees all along by the side of the path. Could I recommend that you erect a few small finger signposts for this location on the nearby roads, as I strongly feel that this Well is worthy of a much wider audience.

Public seating alongside well kept lawns in different places are relaxing places to absorb the views of this busy location.

I must pay due tribute to all those responsible for the maintenance of the three graveyards, one up by Tesco, and the other two situated near the Catholic Church, well done.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

I admired the information panel at the entrance to St Fanaghan’s well and it is interesting and informative. It was great to see some Irish birds coming and going on my way down to the well. You could get a greater interest in this important subject and you made a good start by organising the presentation by Cyril Saich. I also note that you are carrying out a survey of the fauna and flora of the area, and this could be very informative to us all as Mitchelstown is a haven for many different types of wildlife with all those wonderful mature trees and traditional stone walls, and there obviously are many people that are interested in the outdoor pursuits that would be delighted to be involved with you. The walk out past St George’s church is well recessed back from the road and is a fine amenity with a good surface and I spoke to a man taking a breather from his jog and he told me that this pathway circles around and returns back in the town.

Litter Control:

Undoubtedly the local litter warden is a great help to the town, any many other locations bemoan the fact that they are unable to get a litter warden from Cork County Council. The data provided in your presentation is most impressive and I admired all those wonderful photographs of “all systems go for spring clean week in Mitchelstown”, “truck load of rubbish picked up on Ballybeg road”, and “Town cleans up as push for ‘Tidy’ success gets underway”. These are truly great stories and we see what can be achieved by energy and leadership, and your volunteers can be justly proud of the advances they are making in Mitchelstown – well done to all concerned. The town was well presented and little litter was seen and this could come from passing traffic as I am sure none of your people would throw litter about.

Waste Minimisation:

The people of this town are now well aware of best practice in relation to the minimisation of waste and the proper treatment of waste through composting and recycling as a result of the schools getting the green flag – this is a great achievement. I am well sure that the Mitchelstown pupils pictured showing off their recycling talents in the Avondhu could teach us all on this topic. Do proceed to get as much composting information as possible from the environment division of Cork County Council and make this information available to the adult population of the town.

Tidiness:

Some derelict sites were observed and I note you have tackled the problem, but there is not a lot we can do in relation to the private property, but house owners do have a responsibility to properly maintain their premises. Assistance from Cork County Council is now cut back across the board and this is having an effect on larger towns like Mitchelstown. I note the County Council are taking over in July from NRA and this affords you the opportunity to do more to your town, but I realise that money will be a problem. The national problems of cigarette ends and chewing gum residue are in the town, but in fairness some publicans keep their shop front areas brushed clean.

Residential Areas:

The traditional town houses, for the most part, are quite well maintained and attractively decorated, and many of them sported various floral arrangements mainly window boxes, hanging baskets and tubs of flowers. The housing estates, I understand, are mainly guided by residents associations and I was unable to inspect all of the estates of Mitchelstown, but I got a very good impression from the ones that I saw. Attractive public landscaping was on view, and the residents have taken on, from this leadership, the challenge of the adornment of their houses in a competitive fashion. There are some most impressive private houses all around the district and some of them showed beautiful shrubs, trees, lawns and hedging and finally there is the absolute beauty of Kingston Square.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Market Square plays an influential role in relation to the road structure of Mitchelstown, as it can accommodate a huge amount of vehicles, enabling the people to park and do their business in the local shops all around the square, and this is helped in no small way by the fact that there is free parking for two hours. This stops the chaos that is caused in many other busy towns like this, of people double parking while darting into shops for papers etc, and for this reason you could enforce the casual trading to be done only on your designated day – Thursday. Major road works have taken place due to the bypass and I found that the new system is well signposted with clean and distinct signage. You have plans for the roundabouts but I sometimes feel that huge efforts are put into floral arrangements at roundabouts, but the motorist only get a glimpse of these great efforts as they are concentrating mainly on road signs. I prefer permanent structures at roundabouts that have an attractive appearance, and could give a sense of the heritage and business of the town, but require little maintenance.

The back areas of the town are well developed.

General Impression:

You have made great strides in recent years to bring this town up to today standards. I travelled through Mitchelstown on hundreds of occasions in the past and never knew of those hidden treasures, and it was, therefore, very pleasing to follow the instructions in your excellent Tidy Town presentation and admire the surroundings. I was impressed with many things, and in places there are good notice boards setting out useful information, but I was delighted with St Fanaghan's Well and Kingston College. Congratulations to all concerned.