

Tidy Towns Competition 2009

Adjudication Report

Centre: **Letterkenny** Ref: **704**
County: **Donegal** Mark: **300**
Category: **G** Date(s): **21/06/2009**
30/07/2009

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	47
The Built Environment	50	39
Landscaping	50	45
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	34
Litter Control	50	34
Waste Minimisation	20	10
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	30
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	36
General Impression	10	8
TOTAL MARK	400	300

Overall Development Approach:

Congratulations to Letterkenny on the submission of another outstanding entry into the Tidy Towns Competition. Congratulations also on your achievement of a Gold Medal in the Entente Florale. The work done in the spring was truly worthwhile. The level of engagement that your group has with agencies both outside and inside the town is quite remarkable. This is reflected in the many events and publications that are produced in the town throughout the year. Involvement across the community is also evidenced by the full participation of all your schools in the Green School movement. Congratulations to all involved. The encouragement of competition between these schools is a fine idea and the literature arising from the schools such as the Green-Eco and An Nuacht Glas show how seriously these schools take their role in the wellbeing of Letterkenny's environment. Thank you for including other press items. The well-annotated map of the town was very useful. A word of caution: the inclusion of so much information in your entry may lead to important items being overlooked. It might be more useful to supply the data from surveys you report as being finished rather than less relevant material which does not pertain, at least not in its entirety, to the competition.

The Built Environment:

The Courthouse is a lovely building and the sculpture here was admired. The AIB building is very well kept. The Trinity Presbyterian church is very striking. The Post Office looks great. The Church Of Ireland St. Conwal's is another lovely building. The Cavern looked very well and the environs of this were remarkably ordered considering that adjudication took place on a Monday morning following a major sporting event. The Cottage Bar is a very nice premises. The Cathedral is a very impressive building. The new stadium looks very well. While there are many examples of good shop-fronts, several businesses had untidy shop windows and displays. This is as much a disadvantage for the shop owner as for the passer-by. The Courtyard Shopping Centre was very neatly kept. Letterkenny Shopping Centre was also very well presented with some nice planting. The Library and Government Buildings looked good. The red 'green' roof of the Civic Offices

was much admired.

Landscaping:

The Cathedral Square is lovely. The prominent position of the church and its associated public space gives this area a special feel. The Market Square is another very impressive area which really invites the visitor to spend time here. Mount Southwell Place has lovely buildings and is very well planted. The imaginative use of hoarding for the Tidy Towns murals was much admired. The Dry Arch Roundabout is most impressive with excellent planting. There were many other places where landscaping must be admired on the roadsides and corners as well as the other roundabouts. The grounds of the various businesses, schools and colleges must also be mentioned. The new park will continue to be an asset to the town.

The landscaping at the Tourist Office is superb and this was much enjoyed. The use of wood at the Civic Offices is extremely good.

Wildlife and Natural Amenities:

Congratulations on your survey work completed to date. Are these published? The Walks Around Letterkenny/Flora and Fauna Map is excellent. The hedgerow information at the Tourist Office is very good. The butterfly garden here is lovely and on the (unusually) sunny day of adjudication, this was highly enjoyable to visit. The Linear Park is an excellent idea. This sort of parkland is extremely valuable, forming a wildlife corridor which really benefits wild species in and around built up areas. The Green School Competition is another excellent initiative and cannot fail to produce imaginative and educational results! Well done for supporting the use of native stock in both formal landscaping and in private gardens. This is a highly important but often overlooked detail. In time, the benefits to wild species in both parks and estates will be clear.

Litter Control:

Congratulations on the many initiatives you have undertaken to tackle litter. The Cleaner Community Campaign is an excellent idea. Your involvement with Spring Clean and Tidy Estates is also very important. You communicate widely and the best example of which is the collection of cartoon murals around the town which was much admired.

However, some litter was seen on day of visit. Some of this was old. The Subway outlet is a litter blackspot.

Waste Minimisation:

Well done on the many initiatives you have taken that encourage the 'Three Rs'. The widespread use of composting as a means of waste management is highly encouraging. Your work with the Green Schools is very important also. However, there was little evidence of projects designed to specifically minimise waste materials being produced in the first instance. It is recommended that you review your strategy in this regard. The key stakeholders being businesses and householders. The County Council's environmental awareness officer will be able to advise on this. There appeared to be no bottle banks or other bring centre facilities within the town centre. The 'Bring Back Banks' as marked on the map at Lr. Main Street and Oldtown Road could not be found. The banks at the Civic Offices could be found but these were limited to glass and clothes. They were also rather littered with the usual container debris found at bring banks. The Town Council informed me that the new Civic Amenity Site was open Thursdays to Saturdays. How are those in Letterkenny without ready access to a car to recycle?

Tidiness:

The Old Dunnes Stores building is in need of some painting and sign repair. The Tir na n-Og pub and grounds looked good. The Dr. Quirkey's temporary signs at the Polestar Roundabout detracted from the overall effect of the work here.

As pointed out in last year's adjudication, there are several derelict buildings in the centre of the town that would benefit from some informal or interim redecoration. While this has been achieved in some part by the cartoon hoarding murals, there are many other buildings in need of work. Business owners with viable businesses next door to some of these could be asked to bring pressure to bear upon their neighbours.

Not all litter-bins were in good repair and some were overfull on day of visit. There appears to be no effort to maintain the front area of the Driver Testing building and this site is becoming a litter-trap.

Residential Areas:

A very high standard of house and garden maintenance was noted throughout the estates visited on day of visit. The frontage of Ard Adhaimheach is very nice. Ballymacool Terrace is really lovely. The various initiatives undertaken such as the Tidy estates and Clean Community Project are very valuable, especially to the newer parts of the town. It is not clear if there were any moves to seek shared or common area seating areas as proposed by last year's adjudicator.

Roads, Streets and Back Areas:

The Oldtown Road looked very well. Works were underway at Dungloe/Glenties Road. The approach roads generally looked very well despite being very busy. Congestion was a problem at times with understandably few people walking on Pearse Road or any of the outer roads. The planting of semi-mature trees has had a very good effect on some of the busy roads to the north of the town. Despite the busyness of the road and this area, Port Road is actually quite pleasant to walk along. Rosemount Lane is almost unbelievably like a country lane in places, a reminder of the hasty spread of our towns. Some side streets had poorly maintained walls and another significant amounts of graffiti.

Road quality is generally very good and road surfaces for either motorist or cyclist are fine. However, not many cyclists were seen that day. Are there any data on this type of road user? The Historic Walks and Flora and Fauna walking guides are a great way of encouraging people to get out and explore on foot.

General Impression:

Letterkenny is a highly impressive town in terms of all that has been achieved to date. Also impressive is the amount of projects and initiatives which are all working toward a common goal: making Letterkenny a better place to live and visit. Your new green areas will contribute toward this. While there is always room for improvement, your group and the wider community are to be congratulated for the huge progress made in this last and previous years.

Second Round Adjudication:

Many of the new housing estates in the town are well maintained with attractive landscaped areas, of note being Droim Ard Avenue, Glebe Crescent, and Ballyraine Park. There seems to be a very large part of the town that has been rezoned for development, to judge by some hoardings advertising serviced sites, quite a distance from the centre of the town. There also appeared to be a large number of cleared sites in the industrial areas of the town awaiting development, particularly in the vicinity of the Tourist Information Office and Public Services Centre. It is to be wondered when this will now take place, if ever? The Town Park looked very well on the day and should look quite magnificent when it reaches full maturity. A ruined building was noted in this location-is it to be restored at some stage? Attractive landscaping was also noted to an area opposite the Crazy Golf Centre. The many roundabouts of Letterkenny have been attractively landscaped, of particular note being the dramatic timber circular sculpture, surrounded by trees at the Polestar roundabout, and the Dry Arch Roundabout. The avenue of trees along Pearse road is maturing nicely, although some litter was noted in this location. Some more litter was seen in the vicinity of the Courthouse. The retail park was generally well maintained. The new building with the sedum roof that comprises the Letterkenny Public Services Centre, was admired for its innovative design. The landscaping to the Tourist Information Office was admired as was the statuary at the Court House. The main streets of the town were generally well maintained, the Market Square area with bandstand being particularly admired. Ernest Speer's is an attractive traditional shopfront. The dramatic glazed facade to Gallagher's Hotel was also admired.