

# Tidy Towns Competition 2009

## **Adjudication Report**

Centre: **Athy** Ref: **354**  
County: **Kildare** Mark: **262**  
Category: **E** Date(s): **19/06/2009**

	Maximum Mark	Mark Awarded 2009
Overall Development Approach	50	39
The Built Environment	50	38
Landscaping	50	36
Wildlife and Natural Amenities	50	28
Litter Control	50	38
Waste Minimisation	20	7
Tidiness	30	17
Residential Areas	40	27
Roads, Streets and Back Areas	50	25
General Impression	10	7
<b>TOTAL MARK</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>262</b>

### **Overall Development Approach:**

Athy is welcome to the 2009 TidyTowns Competition. Thank you for your detailed submission including your Town Plan 2008-2013 and supporting photos and newspaper clippings. The map included in your submission was very clearly annotated and a real help on adjudication day. You have an active committee of 15 and their input shows in the numbers of projects and consultations you lead and take a role in. The support you receive from local organisations including the innovative Shop Athy initiative is great to see and long may it continue.

### **The Built Environment:**

The historic core of the town centred on Emily Square including the Courthouse and the visitors centre were very well presented, as in previous years, although all of the doors to the visitor centre facing the square were closed, which did not give off a very welcoming feel.

The Model Court development is a sensitive use of an old complex of buildings with an eclectic mix of residents including a doctors, a barbers and a crèche. Unfortunately the entrance to this charming group of buildings was marred by a plethora of wheelie bins. Try to ensure bins are removed as soon as they are collected or else stored in a suitably screened enclave. We also see that your TidyTown Plan notes the signage here is poor, a more appropriate signage typology should be developed appropriate to the historic setting

The Athy Golf Club on the Kildare Road was very well presented and we hope the boundaries of the adjoining driving range will be finished to an equivalent standard. The Dominican Church and its environs were lovely and indeed the view of the church from the Barrow walk was very impressive as it is such a modern form sitting alongside the historic bridge and waterside castle.

The contemporary shop front at Hyland Brothers Butchers was admired as were their window boxes, which were planted in a more contemporary style which really suited the shop. Other premises which especially caught the eye included W.T. Duthie Jewellers traditional frontage, Maddens Pharmacy (which was being painted on adjudication day) and the well presented Robert Redmond Studios. The run of three pubs, Kanes, Clancys and the Nags Head, displayed a fine array of hanging baskets and we wondered if this was as a result of your Shopathy initiative? We would be very interested to see how the Shopathy committee has fared. We were somewhat disappointed by the number of window boxes displayed in the town and would like to hear how many premises got involved in the scheme. Perhaps a review of the scheme could be included in next years submission?

Your efforts to improve the Anglers Rest is a great example of how through working with local owners and the Town Council real results can be achieved on the ground.

### **Landscaping:**

Emily square is maturing nicely with the trees forming a fine canopy for the seats and sign boards. It was good to see that the trees had recently been pruned as this will encourage a health crown formation. The planters atop the poles in both car parking areas at Catherine McCauley Park and Edmund Rice Square were empty on the adjudication day, indeed some were only supporting weeds. This was a shame as I'm sure when planted they would add a real splash of colour to these spaces. The landscaping at Bothar Bui was looking well. But perhaps it is time to prune and cut back the shrub bed surrounding the fine sculpture as it is beginning to screen the views to this fine piece of public art which is a shame. The bridge is such an impressive structure that perhaps the window boxes just cluttered the views. Perhaps they could be better used in a more appropriate location in the town?

### **Wildlife and Natural Amenities:**

Well done on your programme of bird box and feeder installation, a real 'feed and breed' programme! How is your bird feeding programme structured? If suitable habitats with berry bearing and seed bearing shrubs and trees are created then it is very likely that some or all of the following will eventually become established all year round :- Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Blue tit, Blackbird . Have you done a survey to see which birds are in your area? Bird diversity could be assessed by repeatedly walking a predetermined course at regular intervals ( e.g. twice each spring/ early summer) and noting the number and type of birds seen/heard in the areas i.e. road sides, the Riverside Park, etc. You can then use this as a baseline to see if the bird boxes/Feeders and planting programmes are attracting more birds to the area. We note one of the aims of your Town Plan is to carry out an ecology audit. Good luck with this.

### **Litter Control:**

Thank you for your photographs of the litter cleanups involving local schools and volunteers. It is good to see you participating in the National Spring Clean as this really focuses attention on the issue of litter. The volume of litter removed from the Barrow as part of the riverside clean up was very impressive. But perhaps the volume indicates that a more regular schedule of clean ups should be organised in this area, if volunteers can be found. On adjudication day drink cans were seen beside some of the seating areas along the river so this seems to be an ongoing problem for you. Generally for a town of its size, very little litter was noticed, indeed an Athy Town Co. litter collector was seen out sweeping the paths so it seems as if resources are being put in place to keep on top of the issue. Litter was evident in Garter lane; this seems to be somewhat of a litter trap, as noted in your Town Plan, so should be part of your regular litter patrols. The new litter bins, with discreet sponsors names, were admired.

### **Waste Minimisation:**

Well done on your work with the local schools and we wish them every success with their green flags. It was good to hear that the litter collected in your clean ups is segregated as much of that collected from the Barrow seems to be drink cans, which are easily recyclable. The recycling centre in the Edmund Rice car park was well located and clean on adjudication day though the signage was showing some signs of wear and tear. Have you assessed if any of the business in your area are part of the Repak scheme? Are there any local initiatives to encourage waste minimisation in respect of reuse of printer toners, printer cartridges, waste paper and old batteries? There may already be schemes being run in your town that could be included in this category for next years submission and will gain you extra points. Have you organised any seminars for residents for composting methods? This is an aim of your TidyTowns Plan.

### **Tidiness:**

Emily Square was really well presented and all the signage and street furniture here was well maintained. Along the riverside the signage generally needs to be looked after as the sli na slainte signage, especially near the courthouse, was very dirty and needs washing. New information signs were being erected here on

adjudication day so we hope to see an improvement in this area next year when this signage is in place. Well done on your efforts to remove graffiti as very little was noticed around the town but there still seems to be an issue around the riverside area, with some signs here and the wall of the Supervalu being targets. An issue that may become a problem, due to the current climate, is the issue of the large advertisement signs for new housing areas that may be left in place for much longer than anticipated. Ensure that larger signs, such as those for new developments along the Kilkenny Road, are well maintained and repairs are made if they show signs of damage. Limit the amount of additional signage that is being attached to the original signs, which makes them look increasingly cluttered and untidy. You might contact your local planning officer to ensure planning conditions with regard to temporary signage is being upheld. The area around the train station is poorly presented due to potential development sites and the profusion of palisade fencing really detracts from this fine building.

#### **Residential Areas:**

Well done on the successful Residents Association Awards competition. It is great to see this becoming a regular annual event. Many of the more established estates visited, such as Earls Court and Coneyboro, were very well presented. Try to ensure that some of the newer residential areas such as Corran Ard and Dun Brinn, along the Kilkenny road, are encouraged to set up residents associations and becoming involved in the awards. They should be made aware of the Town Councils Residents Association grant scheme to aid them.

#### **Roads, Streets and Back Areas:**

The Athy Project and Development sign 2001 on the Kildare Road was dirty and should be removed if it is out of date or no longer relevant. The Welcome to Athy sign on the same approach road also needs to be cleaned. The plethora of signage attached to the boundary fence at the entrance to the Athy Business Campus looked poor and they should be combined into one large sign to improve the appearance of this entry point to the town. Your efforts at controlling weed growth and keeping grass verges maintained was very evident on the ground, keep up the good work on this.

#### **General Impression:**

Athy is a busy town with an expanding population and a road network which brings a lot of traffic through your town. We congratulate you on all of your efforts to date, as you seem to have developed a successful method of working as a committee and liaising with local organisations. This all helps to strive towards a cleaner and more pleasant place to live for all of your residents. Well done to all involved in this year's submission and we wish you continued success in 2010.